

# The Frozen Northland



WINFIELD S. MASON



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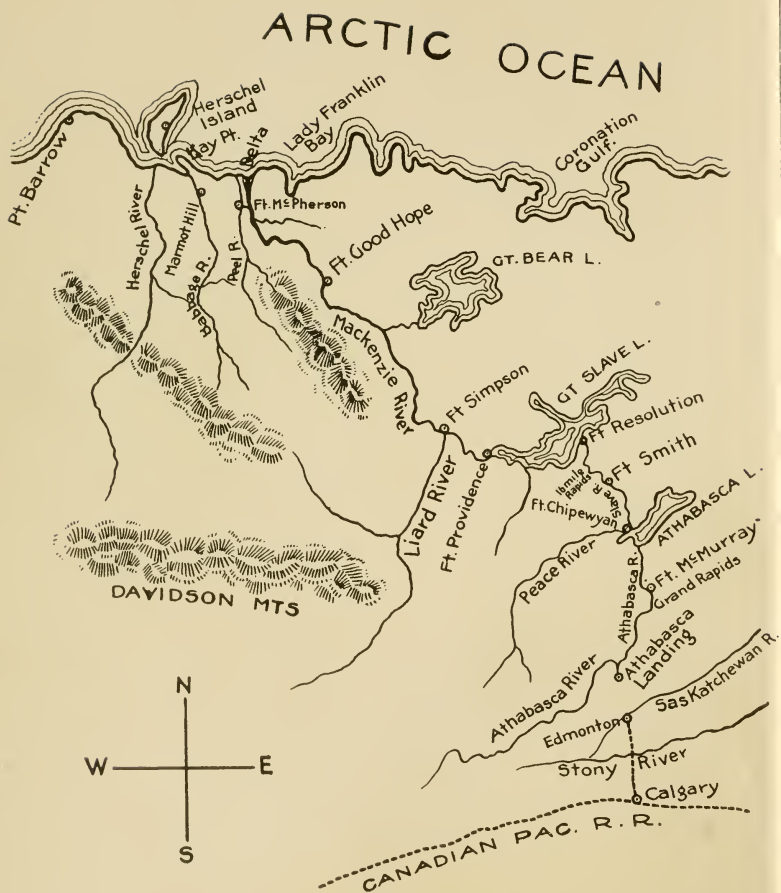
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The route to the Arctic Ocean by water.

# The Frozen Northland

Life With the Esquimo in  
His Own Country

*By*

WINFIELD SCOTT MASON

ILLUSTRATED



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## Preface

THE passion for adventure is inherent in our race, let alone the interest of scientific curiosity, which prompts men to go in search of the unknown.

But science is a great republic in which all have equal rights. Other nations have competed with ourselves to discover the secrets so jealously guarded by the lady of the ice and snow.

In the year of 1897 a new word appeared in the American vocabulary, and the Klondike became a surprise and a sensation, not only to our people, but to the world. Then came the rush. Never has the world witnessed such suffering and hardships. To a few it brought wealth, but to thousands it brought poverty, shattered health, and disappointment.

The unmarked graves of the frozen Northland will never tell the rest of the story.

But the object of the author is to give to the readers of "The Frozen Northland" only personal experiences, together with the knowledge gleaned by the way, with the modes and customs of our dusky friends who dwell in that remote polar region.

## PREFACE

We have endeavored to present both the sunshine and the shade as we saw it.

This book goes out with the earnest desire of the author to entertain its readers by giving facts that are more interesting than misleading fiction.

W. S. M.

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# The Frozen Northland

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## CHAPTER I

### The Return of Jack Wegmer

WHEN Jack Wegmer left Chicago a poor boy, to seek his fortune in the frozen, unexplored regions of the Northlands, his friends shook their heads with a feeling that he was sacrificing his life for that which could only exist in the imagination of his adventurous mind.

Jack had a wild, roving disposition, reckless to the extreme, and the thoughts of camp life, without restraint from the law of civilization, seemed to just suit his nature. Three years passed and not a word had come back from the unknown country to tell of his life or prospects, and people of the neighborhood had almost ceased to comment upon his perilous adventure; in fact, all except his nearest relatives had seemed to drop him entirely from their minds.

But when, late in the fall of the third year, Jack returned with \$35,000 in gold, a flurry of excitement ran through the circle of his acquaintances, and Jack became the hero of all who knew him. But the older

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ones shook their heads, for, if the young man who went away three years before was reckless, the returned "Jack the Miner," as he was termed, was tenfold more so.

He spent his money lavishly, plunging into the depths of vice whose open doors stood ever ready to receive him. But his more intimate friends often observed a wild, troubled look in his eyes, and a sad expression of fear seemed to take possession of him. But he would immediately shake them off and dive into dissipation and pleasure more recklessly than ever. He would tell many exaggerated tales of camp life, and of the rich gold strikes he had made, and often expressed his determination to return to his mine as soon as spring opened the next year.

But as spring approached and the time drew near for his departure, a sudden attack of typhoid fever took possession of him, and grim death fastened its fangs upon him and could not be bribed by all the gold of Klondike.

When these serious complications set in, the chart was brought before him, which he had often referred to as leading to a rich mine of gold, but he was too sick to explain, and with a wild look of fear, as of some haunted creature, he pushed it from him, and soon passed into a state of unconsciousness.

In three days Jack was dead. He had braved perils by land and sea, and now was snatched away by the hand of death when on the very threshold of apparent happiness and ease. But such is the mystery of destiny.

It was now the month of March, and his friends



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who believed that the chart which Jack had so jealously guarded would lead them to a mine of wealth, decided to organize a party and carry out the plan of the dead miner. Only a few weeks intervened before they must needs leave the land of civilization, and plunge into the region of the frozen Northland. Consequently, a party was soon made up of four determined men (including the writer) and on the 12th day of April, 1898, left Chicago on the midnight express, which was to carry them as far as possible into the great Northwest, Canada, two thousand miles away to the North.

On arriving at the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, we found the ground covered with snow, and our overcoats and gloves served us well in keeping out the cold while we proceeded to investigate the prospect of securing supplies for our Northern journey.

Outfitting for a party of four, with supplies and equipments for a journey to the Arctic Coast, is not an easy undertaking. But there are guide books and guide books sent out by every concern that kept Arctic supplies, and with several of these in our possession, after two days of bantering, choosing, and then exchanging, we succeeded in closing a bargain with the Hudson's Bay Company at Edmonton, Northwest Territory, Canada. Edmonton is located on the Saskatchewan River, at the terminus of a branch of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, which leaves the main line at Calgary, and is at this time the northernmost point on the North American Continent to be reached by a continuous line of railroad. Edmonton is the largest market

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for raw furs in the world, and in the old days was the only important settlement in that section, being the nerve center of the Hudson's Bay Company's operations. To-day their business of collecting furs extends to that district of the Northwest Territory known as the Mackenzie, extending to the Arctic Sea and to the edges of Yukon, British Columbia, and Keewatin. However, only a comparatively small number of the native trappers come into Edmonton. The others go only to the primitive and isolated posts or landings in the North Country. There they deal with the traders, some of whom represent the great companies, while others buy on their own account. Pelts are exchanged for supplies, and occasionally a banknote or a few pieces of silver. But it is little enough the Indian gets at best.

The market value of skins brought into Edmonton each year, exclusive of those of the Hudson's Bay Company, is between \$500,000 and \$600,000, but much less than that goes to the trappers. The traders must have their profit, and they get at least as much out of the trappers as of the man to whom they sell. However, the Indian seems to wish for nothing more than a little coarse food and clothing and guns and traps wherewith to carry on his business. The white man finds his justification in this fact, and to his credit it is said that from the old days down to the present time he has never permitted a hungry Indian to be unfed nor a sick one to be uncared for. He has even gone further than that. If the peltries brought in by the natives are not worth as much as the supplies they actually need,

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the white man gives them the balance and "charges it" to them until the next season.

Some of the Indians in the more northerly sections, where the furs are finest because of the greater cold, seldom or never see a white man or any signs of civilization. They remain in the woods from one year's end to another. Pelts which they gather and place in caches are collected by half-breed representatives of the traders, who follow the trails and settle accounts with the trappers whenever the opportunity offers. Members of many tribes are engaged in the work, among the most prominent being the Crees, Chippewayans, Louchoux, Dog-Ribs, Yellow Knives, Ojibways, Blackfeet, Crows, Shoshones, Stonies, Kastenais, Chinooks, Chilcoots, and farther north the Eskimos.

Many of these are shiftless and not inclined to labor more than is actually necessary to bring in the necessities of life, but the white man pays high tribute to the honesty of practically all of them.

Our party, after securing the services of two half-breed Cree Indians, with horses and wagons, started on a tedious tramp through an uninhabited wilderness to Athabasca Landing, ninety miles away to the north. It was now the 18th of April, but the ice had not yet broken up, and we crossed the Saskatchewan River just at daybreak with our three tons of provisions, clothing, and mining equipage, drawn by eight wiry mustangs, while astride the left wheeler sat a half-breed Cree, whose shouts of "Cush! Cush!" and crack of the whip echoed through the scrub timbered hills and ra-

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vines. Our little party of four whites, with guns slung to our shoulders, followed behind the slowly moving train, enjoying the novel surroundings and noting here and there the signs of game, which were sometimes the footprints made by Bruin in the sand or by the sharp hoof of the wary moose, while many a grouse during the day fell a victim to our fire, thus adding "the real thing," as Thompson would say, to our supper as we sat around the campfire at night.

The third day out we crossed Sturgeon River about noon, where we decided to camp until the next day to give the horses a chance to browse, and to rest our already blistered feet. The sun shone warm during the day, but the nights were chill and frosty, and our heavy woolen blankets served us well as we lay on our bed of spruce boughs and listened to the querulous howl of the coyote.

No incident of note occurred until the morning of the sixth day. We had camped on Stony Creek, which is about ten miles from the landing. Moose signs were plenty, and we had been out early to try for a shot before starting and had just returned to breakfast disappointed, when suddenly one of the Indians, who had started out where the horses were feeding, came running into the tent, and catching up his rifle, sprang onto one of the nearest horses and dashed away into the scattering timber. As we stood watching him, a moose was seen to step into the creek bed a short distance up the stream, where it stood apparently gazing at two of the horses which were tethered nearby. Breakfast was for-

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gotten, and with rifle in hand we each dodged behind a thicket, through which we could peer, and awaited developments. The Indian could be seen circling through the timber and coming nearer the moose from the opposite direction, with his rifle poised and pointed at the game. The cayuse, being of nearly the same color as the moose, did not frighten it in the least, and it stood watching the approach until we began to be impatient because the Cree still withheld his fire. But at this juncture the moose must have begun to scent danger, for it suddenly bounded a few steps up the slope and turned its head back toward the Indian, when a report rang out, and the moose was seen to turn a complete somersault and plunge into the thicket which grew along the bank of the creek. The next moment such a snorting and kicking as begun among our horses I never saw before, as, breaking the lariats, they came rushing and tearing through the brush to where our wagons were standing. The moose, crazed by the shot, and no doubt taking the mustangs for other moose, ran bumping against trees and over bushes in a mad effort to follow them, but finally laid down not fifty feet from where we were standing, when a well-directed shot settled the matter. It was a two-year-old cow, and furnished us with the finest venison for many days.

That night we reached Athabasca Landing, and, pitching our big tent (which was 12 x 14 feet) placed all our belongings inside. The half-breeds, after receiving their pay of \$60, drove into the edge of the timber, turned their tired ponies out to browse, and rolling

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themselves in their blankets, were soon asleep. The next morning each was astir before daybreak. Much work had to be done before starting on our long journey down stream, and it was already later than we had expected to arrive here. Several miners had come down from the Hudson Bay post at Little Slave Lake, and were waiting for the river to clear of ice before starting. Others who were employed by the Hudson Bay Company were engaged in repairing or building scows, either for their own use or to sell, while a few Indian tepees could be seen back in the edge of the timber. Three or four tents were pitched upon the level patch of ground, near the south bank of the river, while an old shanty, occupied by the Hudson Bay Company, was all that was to be seen of what was, a few days later, a swarming, bustling village.

On learning that some miners had a portable saw-mill a few miles up the river, we immediately shouldered what tools we could carry, and, leaving one man to care for the camp, started up river. The day was half gone before we reached the place, where we found three of the most woe-begone men one could possibly imagine. They had spent three weeks in trying to set up their little mill, but possessing no experience, they could not make it work, and were about to abandon it and go down to the landing for help. They had come down the river before the ice had broken, expecting to have the lumber sawed and their boat built in time to leave at the first breaking up of the ice. But now the river was nearly clear and their prospect was anything



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but flattering. Our party being composed of two practical engineers and one carpenter, we asked permission to overhaul the machinery, which was readily given. In fact, I believe if we had agreed to saw out lumber for their boat they would have given us the entire mill outfit. But suffice it to say, we worked all the afternoon, and the next day we began to saw, and a finer mill no one could ask for. The side hill above the mill was covered with Norway pines, and a skidway was full of logs before we began. We sawed out lumber sufficient for two boats, and then we turned the mill over to its original owners, and a happier set of men I never saw. Soon boat loads of miners began coming down the river, and orders for lumber came thick and fast, until, when we left them, they were selling boat lumber for \$35 per thousand, the miners rolling the logs onto the skidway. Whether they ever left for down-stream or not, we never heard, but one thing we did know, and that was that they had a Klondike all their own.

## II

### Camp Life at Athabasca

THE next two weeks were spent in building our boats. The scow being thirty-two feet long with eight-foot beam, twenty-eight-foot mast, with plenty of sails, two sets of oars, sixteen feet long, and a sweep which worked on a pivot at the stern of the boat. Each end of the boat was decked over for eight feet with matched lumber, while all over, from deck to deck, was nicely fitted heavy canvas to button over the outside of the gunwale during wet, stormy weather. All the necessary tools and materials were brought up from the camp in a small boat (borrowed from the workmen at the landing), and for the first few days we worked almost constantly, hardly stopping to eat or sleep. As all hands had been retained to push forward the boat-building, we were now becoming uneasy as to the safety of our camp at the landing, and this the more so, as word came to us that many miners had already arrived. So, when Saturday night came, it was decided to launch our scow, load in our tools, lumber, and material, and float down to the landing, where we could finish, pitch, and caulk her, and at the same time guard our outfit from any intrusion. As we came down near the land-



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ing, the barking of dogs and shouting of men could plainly be heard, while no less than twenty tents could be seen pitched along the edge of the river. A saw-mill was on the ground and being set up by the Hudson Bay Company, while several log cabins were being completed and already occupied. We drew the scow up opposite our tent and hastened to examine our neglected outfit. The front of the tent had been torn open and no less than fifty pounds of our best bacon partly eaten and entirely spoiled by thieving dogs. Whether the dogs were alone in breaking into our tent, we could only conjecture, but we swore vengeance on any prowling curs for all time to come, and many a retreating howl could be heard during our stay, caused by a dash of hot water which the cook kept constantly on hand.

Sunday was spent in leisurely strolling about the place or talking over our future prospects, for not a stroke of work was done on that day. The example was set by the employees of the Hudson Bay Company, and all fell into line as a matter of course. Toward night we heard singing in one of the tents, and on walking over, found a meeting in progress, and while not a strictly Christian congregation, many took part, telling of the loved ones left behind, of the dangers before them, and beseeching the guidance of Him who rules both land and sea.

Having noticed a small stream emptying into the river, which appeared to contain fish, I expressed a desire one evening, as we sat in camp, to try my luck the next morning at catching a few fish for breakfast. The

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idea meeting with the approval of the boys, I hunted up our box of fishing tackle, and having chosen a couple of small hooks and lines, procured some bait, and then turned in for the night. The next morning just at day-break Sisk and myself were a half-mile up the creek, casting our hooks into all the pebbly pools above which the little stream rippled and tumbled in its haste to reach the river. A few trout were taken, but they were mostly small fry, and we reached the river with scarcely enough shiners for a single meal, not to speak of the four robust, hungry men, each expecting to breakfast on fish. As we stood watching the scores of minnows that were darting about at the mouth of the stream, we heard a vigorous "swish" and a "flap" as a great pike shot in among them, scattering them in every direction, and securing a mouthful, swam back in the river. In a few moments the same thing was repeated, until no less than a dozen large fish of the pickerel tribe had come in for a breakfast off the minnows. Without a word, we both started on a run for the camp, and when we returned there were four of us with dip-nets, hooks, line and reel, and flies of every description. Talk about fun! Those fish were nearly starved, and I doubt if they ever saw a hook before. The first cast a "dusty miller" was taken the moment it struck the water, and no matter what the bait, or how careless or awkward the cast, it was taken as soon as it fell. Breakfast and work were alike forgotten, and at nine o'clock we had taken more fish than we could carry. We sold enough to pay for our time, and gave many away. But I have

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never seen fish so anxious to be caught as on the morning we first went to try our luck. I often heard, when farther down the river, of the Indians catching fish at the landing with only a piece of red flannel for bait, and I believed every word of it.

The Athabasca River is a very beautiful stream, with a current of about four miles an hour. It is five hundred yards wide, and its sloping banks are covered with spruce, hemlock, and pine.

The ice had now all disappeared, the water had receded to its usual depth, and many boats were starting on the perilous trip—with dangers untried and unknown to the most of them—which if successful would perhaps secure for them a little of the vast wealth which the whole world madly desires.

Will we succeed? Time alone can tell. It was now the 8th of May, and Athabasca Landing was a swarming village of four hundred inhabitants. Many had come over the same trail we had taken, while Indian guides from Lake La Biche and other points along the river could be seen standing around, anxious for an engagement to pilot our boats through the rapids and over the portages that lay between Grand Rapids and Fort McMurray, a distance of one hundred and eighty miles down stream. Accosting one of these guides, who was a tall, noble-looking fellow—his black beard and clear complexion showing plainly his French descent—we inquired if he was engaged. He told us in very plain English that he was not, but that he had acted as guide for fur traders and explorers for the past

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twenty years, and being acquainted with every spot in the river, could pilot several boat-loads as well as one. On inquiring of the Hudson Bay Company, we found him to be one of the most reliable guides that had ever been in their employ, unsurpassing for honesty and truthfulness—which we afterwards found to be true. He was known far and near as Captain Shot. We plainly saw that he was waiting for a Klondike price, so we offered him \$50 to pilot us to Fort McMurray, and added that he might engage as many other boats to follow us as he could, but that we should expect him to ride with us and handle the sweep. As our offer was \$10 more than the others were paying, he said, "All right, saire," and started away. We were not sure at first what he intended to do, but when we were ready to start, Captain Shot was the first man on board, and proved an indispensable and agreeable companion.

### III

## Down the Athabasca River

### LOST! CAPTAIN SHOT'S STORY

OUR boat was now finished, with the small skiff dancing at its side, and loading all our belongings into it, we rowed out into the middle of the river and started down-stream. As we rounded the bend a short distance below the Landing I raised my oars out of the water and glanced back at the little village, now dotted with a hundred tents and cabins, its main street pulsing with the hurly-burly of money-getting, and reminding one in many ways of Leadville during the boom days, while along the beach boats of every style and shape lay moored. "Was it possible, and all in two weeks?" But the thick fur trees quickly shut out the sight, and as the captain's voice rang out, I began pulling at the oar again, while a song rang upon the water like the following:

They left behind them foe and friend,  
And disappeared from haunts of men,  
They climbed the snow-capped mountain peaks,  
And crossed the frozen lakes and creeks  
To Klondike.

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They braved the howling northern blast  
That froze their marrow as it passed,  
Footsore and weary, worn, dismayed,  
They never let the vision fade  
Of Klondike.

After rowing for some time, a light breeze sprang up, and hoisting the square sail we threw ourselves upon the soft bedding near the rear deck and enjoyed the beautiful scenery along the shore. Several times ducks came swooping down the stream and would alight near us, only to fall a victim to our ever-ready fowling pieces. While at Edmonton we had procured a fine water spaniel called Sport, which now performed yeoman's service for us in retrieving game shot from the boat.

The second day out, Pelican Rapids were passed. Here we found a boat stranded on the rocks; the owners of the boat having no guide, had struck against a rock and were unable to shove off. With our help they were soon in deep water again, and crossing over to the opposite side passed on in safety. Several bands of Indians were camped at this point, engaged in catching fish that became stranded on the gravel below the rapids where the water was too shallow for them to escape. Tons of fish were taken in this way each spring by the natives. The next day we arrived at Grand Rapids, where the foaming torrent races along on both sides of the river with an island a half-mile in length in its center, over which our goods and boat had to be portaged to the lower end of the rapids. This being the route of the Hudson Bay Company, a good road

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had been cut through the center of the island, but to portage a boat like ours a half-mile, with all of the luggage, was no small undertaking. Nevertheless, our goods were promptly thrown out and piled up on the island, our boats drawn to land, and the work of portaging began. By cutting stringers and rollers from the small pines that grew upon the island, our boat was soon on its way. Here the Captain's son, a stalwart boy of eighteen, joined us with two other boatloads of miners, and as our boat was the first to reach the island, all hands turned to and rushed the work along. All night we worked as men seldom work, and completely tired out just as day began to break, we dropped upon the ground over which we had lugged our ponderous loads and slept until the hot sun and wicked sand-flies drove us again to action. Another day and night similar to the first followed before the last boat was launched at the lower end of the island. But time was passing and we did not spare ourselves. Hoisting our sail, we now pushed forward, resting or catching a little sleep as the scow sped on its way. Rapids now came thick and fast. Brule Rapids and Boiler Rapids were run without trouble, but on reaching Cascade Rapids, which had a fall of eight feet, and which drop suddenly over sharp rocks and boulders into a foaming whirlpool below, we were obliged to unload our cargo and let the boat down with ropes from the edge of the bank. Now these banks were perpendicular rock, towering high above our heads with only a small jutting ledge on which to stand. But nothing daunted,



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we unloaded our goods and began carrying them along the narrow shelf to the lower end of the rapids. With hammer and chisel a block and tackle was made fast to the rock just above the falls, through which a rope was passed, and one end fastened to the stern of the boat, while just below the rapids was a similar block with rope attached to the bow of the boat. Captain Shot now sprang into the boat, and with the sweep turned her bow toward the middle of the stream, where the rapids were less dangerous, while the rope from the stern held the boat from going too swiftly. As the falls were reached, the Captain, with a quick move, threw off the rope from the stern and shot ahead into the whirling maelstrom below. But the men below the falls were waiting, and quickly drew the uninjured boat to shore, in which was a small amount of water with a very wet Captain clinging to the sweep.

Our cargo was soon loaded, and the next day at twelve o'clock we reached Fort McMurray, which is one of the Hudson Bay Company's most important posts, and from which place Captain Shot was to leave us and return to Athabasca Landing on foot. But a heavy rain set in with a north wind blowing, and we all decided to wait over until more favorable weather. That night, after supper, as we were all sitting in the tent around our little camp stove, several of the residents of the fort came in, and after talking over their experiences in that far Northern country some one asked Captain Shot to tell us of the time he was lost in the great woods. The Captain, after some hesitation, be-



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gan: "It is seldom you ever hear of an Indian being lost in his own country. But I am no Indian. My mother was as pure a French woman as ever crossed the Canadian border, and I, her only son, was left fatherless before I can remember. But the Indians were kind, and my mother became the squaw of an Indian chief. But long ago she went to join her first love. Since then I have lived entirely among the Crees, hunter, trapper, and guide. My wife, a Cree, and the only son I have left of two, you see before you. Of the other one I now speak. It was seven years ago in September. A party of fur traders came to the fort to engage me to guide them over this same route in a canoe to Fort Chipewyan. I knew it would be late before I could return, but they offered well, and we started immediately, taking my oldest boy—a lad of fourteen—with me. Much difficulty was experienced in getting down. The ice had begun to form and we had much bad weather, but we finally reached the fort, and after settling satisfactorily started back by way of an old trail which runs more direct than the river. I figured to reach home in about eight days. After traveling nearly a day, a rain set in, accompanied with sleet, and soon everything was covered with ice. On reaching a creek we found the water so high we could not cross, and cutting some small pines with my hatchet we threw them across the stream, but when we attempted to cross they slipped from under us and we plunged into the water. I succeeded in reaching the other side, but my boy was carried

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down stream and finally caught by some driftwood, when I threw him the end of a pole and drew him to shore. But my gun and pack containing our provisions were lost in the rushing waters. Our matches were wet and useless, and there was not a camp for sixty miles ahead. The only thing to do was to return to the fort. So following up the stream to where the water seemed more shallow we forded it with some difficulty and started towards the fort. Night came on cold and dark, with snow falling in great flakes, until the trees and bushes bent under its great weight. Soon it became very dark, but we dared not stop walking, for in our wet clothes we were chilled through and through. In vain I tried to follow the trail, but it was no use. In a blind way we kept traveling. We had eaten nothing since leaving the fort, and hunger began to gnaw at our vitals. The snow continued to fall, and at daybreak was nearly a foot deep. The cold was intense. I tried to discover our course, but snow and ice was everywhere. Our clothes were frozen. Still we trudged on until my poor boy sank down completely exhausted. I tried to encourage him, saying the fort must be near now. I took him on my back and started on, but it was of no use. We should have reached the fort long before this, but everything looked strange. Not a familiar object greeted our sight. Must we perish? I scraped the bark from the small trees and ate it with relish, but my poor boy was sick and feverish. Drawing an old pack strap from my coat I scraped it thin, and he chewed this and seemed to re-

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vive. Again we started. Soon we came to a stream of water. Where were we? A familiar object caught my eye. I ran to the spot. It was where I had cut down the small pines to throw across, twenty-four hours before. My heart sank within me. Scraping away the snow from under the drooping branches of a large hemlock I cut some boughs, and after shaking off the snow laid them down for a bed, on which I now laid my beloved boy. Taking off my coat I covered him as best I could. He was already asleep. I watched him for a moment, then kissing his hot cheek I started on a run. I could follow the trail now. Forty miles before help can be reached. A horrible fear came over me. Shall I ever see my dear boy alive again! My head whirled, still I ran on. All night and all day I kept on. My body seemed paralyzed and my vitals on fire. I tore the strings and tops from my moccasins, chewing and swallowing them in my distraction. At last I reached the fort just able to point back on my trail and whisper, 'Go! Go! Go quick!' The next I remember I was lying in bed with cold, wet cloths on my head. Some one was saying, 'He is better now.' I turned my head and asked, 'Where is my boy?' But no answer came."

Here Captain Shot's hands clasped his head and he was convulsed with weeping. "We must go now," said our guests, and they started for the door of the tent. "And what about the boy?" says I, touching the arm of the last one out, "the wolves had got there first," was the only reply.

## IV

# The Perils of the Rapids, Etc.

### MOUNTAIN PORTAGE

LEAVING Fort McMurray we continued our journey down stream. But being without a guide, we proceeded with caution, camping on the banks of the river at night, and making the best time possible during the day. The weather was now fine and the sun shone forth warm and bright, with scarcely a breath of air. A constant splash of the oar and the occasional shouts of the men, as some other boat would heave in sight or some object of interest meet their gaze, served to break the monotony of our surroundings, while birds of many species sang in the thick, green clumps of shrubbery that girded the shore. On the second day of June we met the small steamer *Graham* owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, which plies between Fort McMurray and Smith's Landing, a distance of two hundred and ninety miles, distributing supplies to the different forts along the line and bringing back the winter's catch of fur. As they came opposite our scow, steam was shut off, and throwing us a line they spent a half-hour in chatting and inquiring where we were going and what was our prospects, and ended by giving us much useful information regarding the route.

## THE PERILS OF THE RAPIDS, ETC.

While watching out for a good place to camp, late one afternoon, we came to where a small creek emptied into the river, and decided to put out our gillnet, as we had not tasted fish since leaving Athabasca Landing. So while the other two pitched the tent, Thompson and myself stretched the net across the mouth of the creek. Ducks had been so plentiful all along the trip that often large flocks were passed, which were allowed to swim to the opposite side of the river unmolested. And now, as we stood watching our net, a large flock came swimming down the creek to the river. But as our net reached several inches above the water they were unable to proceed, and swam back and forth, uttering low sounds of astonishment, much to our amusement. Soon, however, the leader seemed to decide upon a way to overcome the difficulty without resorting to flight, and swimming up within several feet of the net dove out of sight, followed by the whole flock. The next moment our net was bobbing up and down as if it intended tearing itself loose from the stakes that held it taut. Soon several ducks arose to the surface gasping for breath, and with a frightened squawk went sailing up the creek. We waited until all was quiet, and then proceeded to examine our catch. As we drew the net to shore several large holes could be seen, but entangled in the meshes were eight as fine mallards as I ever saw. The net was replaced, and the ducks dressed for supper. The next morning a single fish of about two pounds was all the net contained, but we felt well paid for our trouble, and started on our journey with a laughing remark about

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

our queer and remarkable catch. That night we reached Athabasca Lake, into which the river empties. This body of water is about ten miles wide and fifty in length. But by keeping close to the south shore we crossed to the lower end of the lake and soon reached Fort Chipewyan, which is situated at the west end of Athabasca Lake.

This fort is built upon a foundation of solid, red granite. In fact, the whole lake front for a half-mile back from the water is solid rock, not a shrub nor blade of grass nor a bit of living vegetation is to be seen along the beach, which is naught but a mass of rough, rolling, red rock. Several cabins are built near the fort, while, back on the hillside a small mission surrounded by Indian huts and shanties can be seen. The fort is governed entirely by the Hudson's Bay Company, and comprises a store where merchandise suitable for trade with the natives is kept, a warehouse for furs, and a small apartment said to be used by the Northwest mounted police when required, but no such officers were to be seen during our stay.

Here we first met with the slave Indians, who resemble the Crees except in their habits of living. They are said to be more intelligent and industrious, living entirely in huts and cabins, instead of tepees, as do the Crees. After a day spent in overhauling and repitching our scow, we left Fort Chipewyan, and, entering the Slave River, proceeded on our journey. The stream is slow and sluggish, and much work was encountered. But by treking the



## THE PERILS OF THE RAPIDS, ETC.

scow, using a long line where the banks would permit, we made very good time, and reached the junction of the Peace River in two days. It was now the 12th day of June, but a cold rain set in, accompanied with snow, and we were obliged to camp for several days before we proceeded uninterruptedly. Our net was set out and several fish taken. But time dragged slowly, and it was with thankful hearts that we again saw the sky clear, and pushed on with renewed vigor. Many pelicans were seen on this river, either standing in the shallow water or soaring high above us, following the course of the stream, but being unfit for food we did not molest them. A few days brought us to Smith's Landing, where for sixteen miles is a continuous succession of rapids and no less than six portages, some of which caused us to repent that we had ever undertaken such a lamentable pursuit. And speaking of mosquitos! One would think that they had been banished not only from New Jersey, but all the States of the Union and those of Mexico as well, and had taken up their permanent abode at Smith's Landing. Mosquito netting came quickly into use, for the farther we went the more ravenous they became, until the whole atmosphere seemed full of swarming daggers ready to pierce us at first opportunity. Even the native dogs could be seen running and howling, and often plunging into the water to rid themselves of the tormentors. A guide was now indispensable, and many boats were waiting to be piloted over this—the most hazardous part of all the trip. After some delay we

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

succeeded in closing a bargain with one Jim Sanderson, a Slave Indian, to pilot us to Fort Smith for \$40. That afternoon we started down the rapids. Here the river narrowed with a deep, swift channel near the right bank, and only an experienced guide could have kept our boat off the rocks that nearly grazed its sides as we shot past into the foaming waters below. At times we were obliged to row with all our strength, and again a warning shout from the guide would oblige us to lift our oars high above our heads or whirl them inside the boat, as a large boulder or rockbound shore appeared to shoot past us. Soon the rapids became so swift and the water so shallow, with rocks sharp and dangerous to encounter, that we decided to portage our cargo and run the empty boat down until navigation became less dangerous. So our party willingly set to portaging the goods, and allowed the guide to navigate the scow as he thought best. Day after day the work went on, and although no incident occurred to us, many a hairbreadth escape was added to our experiences, and often a plunge-bath was given us that we were least expecting. But one day, after we had become more used to the dangers through which we were passing, we witnessed an incident which causes me to shudder even now when I think of it, and the consternation and excitement of which nearly proved fatal to one of our crew. Having reached a bend in the river the stream became more narrow and very swift and deep, with a fall of several feet. Below the falls the river had formed a basin, and after whirling about flowed gently on its course. At





*"The last rapids were finally passed, and once more we breathed freely."*



## THE PERILS OF THE RAPIDS, ETC.

the farther end of this basin lay a large boulder, which a boat coming down the rapids would certainly strike except for the sweep which the guide always handled, and which if turned to one side would cause the boat to just pass the rock and shoot away down the river. Several boats had already passed in safety, and our scow with cargo and crew had just entered the channel, where the water was far too swift for us to turn back, when the boat ahead of us was seen to shoot over the falls. But as it dropped down the sweep was lifted off the pivot which held it to the stern of the boat. The next instant a crash was heard, and the boat appeared to stand on end for an instant and then settle back directly in the path of our onrushing scow. Our crew was instantly thrown into the greatest confusion, and one of the men, being an excitable fellow, attempted to spring overboard (with the sure result of instant death) had not some of the cooler heads caught him and jerked him back into the boat. In a moment more our scow shot down the falls, and striking against the half-submerged boat sheered safely off into the stream. The next instant the water closed forever over the unfortunate boat with its precious load. The guide had jumped with the sweep just before striking the rock and escaped injury. But the poor miners (four in number), not knowing of the accident to the sweep, made no effort to escape and received the full force of the shock. One was dashed against the rock, killing him instantly; while two others were seen lying insensible in the bottom of the boat, and sank to rise no more. The fourth,

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though badly bruised, probably recovered, but being without supplies, decided to return when the steamer arrived again.

The next day we pushed on and reached the mountain portage. Here the rapids were impassible, and our scow, with all its contents, had to be taken over a sand hill one hundred feet high and a half-mile long. This was the greatest obstacle we encountered in all our journey, and four days were spent in performing the most tiresome and heaviest labor I ever experienced. These were, indeed, dark days. With innumerable mosquitoes by night and vast swarms of flies whose ferocious appetites by day made existence almost an impossibility, it is wonderful how we got through it all. Large horseflies swarmed about us, whose bite equaled the sting of a bee. The last rapids were finally passed, and once more we breathed freely. On June 22d we reached Fort Smith, where we found the Hudson's Bay Company's steamer *The Wrigley* about ready to start down stream. She is a side-wheeler of about fifty tons, and has accommodations for forty people besides the crew, who are all Indians except the captain. Several fur traders from the Hudson's Bay Company were on board with their stock of merchandise for the different forts along the Mackenzie River, while enroute for McPherson, which is the terminus of their route. Fort McPherson is situated on the Peel River, one hundred and sixty miles from the Arctic Coast, and is the headquarters for explorers, miners, and fur traders of the Arctic region. While at Fort Smith we met with sev-

## THE PERILS OF THE RAPIDS, ETC.

aral Government officers known as the Northwestern mounted police, although a horse is not known to be found north of Athabasca Landing. In conversation with one of these young fellows, I asked him what they found to do in such a wild country as this. "Aw," he replied, "we are the mounted police, don't you know." We often saw them farther down the river with red turban caps tilted to one side of their head, but always the same jolly good fellows, and often they gave us a good turn by way of reliable information concerning the route. The next day about nine o'clock a favorable wind sprang up, and hoisting sail we ran about seventy-five miles before landing.

That night the steamer *Wrigley* passed us with no less than a dozen boats in tow. But the weather was fine, and we decided to navigate our own boat and save the \$50 it would cost us to be towed along by the steamer. The nights were balmy and warm, and our boat was kept continually on the move. The camp stove was set up on the front deck, and thereafter our meals were all taken on board ship. A bed was made up on the tops of the sacks of flour near the rear deck, and while two would sleep the others kept the scow in motion. The small tent was raised above the rear portion of the boat as a protection from the sun by day and the dampness by night, for the showers were frequent and came often upon us suddenly with hardly a moment's warning. Game being abundant along the shore of the river, our ever-ready rifles kept us well supplied with venison and wild fowl. Ducks and geese

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were continually passing us back and forth in their flight as they followed the course of the river, and often a brood of young ones, accompanied by the mother, could be seen ahead of the boat swimming with all their might in a vigorous effort to get away. These were always watched with great interest, but never harmed or molested.

We were now nearing Fort Resolution. The river began to widen, the banks became lower and more level, indicating its proximity to the Great Slave Lake into which the river empties. On reaching the fort we immediately landed, and pitching the big tent transferred our cargo inside. The scow was then turned bottom side up preparatory to calking and pitching, of which it stood largely in need since the severe strain occasioned by encountering so many rapids.

This Indian village is surrounded with heavy timber, pine, hemlock, maple, and spruce towering high above the houses, affording protection from the storms of winter and the heat of the short summer. Several native men and women came sauntering down to the beach as we landed, and scores of children, clad in all manner of costumes, watched us from the edge of the timber, chatting to each other in their native dialect as the work proceeded. "Children of the woods," with no aspirations or education, how little they know or imagine of the great outside world! But such is the life of the Indian in the Northland.



*"Children of the woods. How little they know of the great outside world."*







## Fort Resolution

“SKIN FOR SKIN”—THE GREAT SLAVE LAKE—DEAD  
MAN’S ISLAND—LOST IN THE MOUNTAINS—  
TIMBER WOLVES

FORT RESOLUTION is situated on the north shore of Great Slave Lake, and is one of the largest forts along the route. This place is noted for the vast amount of valuable furs caught in the vicinity. Bear, wolf, fox, wolverine, otter, marten, mink, and muskrat are found near the lake, while moose, caribou, and mountain sheep furnish meat in abundance. Fishing is also carried on here with great success, many tons being dried every summer for winter’s use. We set our nets and were rewarded with some of the finest specimens of trout and salmon I ever saw. Fort Resolution has a settlement of no less than eight hundred inhabitants, Indians and half-breeds. They are all engaged in hunting and trapping, and every one of them is absolutely dependent upon the Hudson’s Bay Company for every article of domestic use, except what nature provides in the way of skins and meat. Very little money is used, and I doubt if many of the

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Slave Indians would know its value, while the coast natives, or Eskimos, are in total ignorance of any money or its value. A marten or mink skin is called "one skin," and is valued at 50 cents; a red fox is "two skins," or \$1; wolverine or otter is "ten skins," or \$5; while a dog or rifle is valued at "twenty skins," which is \$10; silver or black foxes are more valuable, and often bring 100 skins, or \$50. But it must be remembered that these are all paid for in trade at the following prices (which are the Hudson's Bay Company's standard prices to all Indians): calico, per yard, 1 skin; muslin, per yard, 2 skins; tea, per pound, 4 skins; sugar, per pound, 2 skins; flour (25-pound sack), 10 skins; common wool blankets, 50 skins; while beads, jewelry, and the like depend upon the demand. It will be plainly seen that the double profit is all on the side of the company and not the Indians, although the Biblical quotation "Skin for skin" is over the door of the store in plain English.

On June 26th, the wind being fair, we started to cross Great Slave Lake. But when about fourteen miles out from shore a strong wind sprang up and we were obliged to change our course, and landed on a small island called Dead Man's Island, it having been a burying place for the Indians for many years. This island, not connecting with the main land, prevented the disturbance of the graves by howling animals. Many peculiar-shaped stones and articles of dress, carved from both wood and ivory, could be seen scattered about; also arrow heads, stone axes, and beads

## FORT RESOLUTION

in abundance. All of these things are sacred to the Indians, and are never disturbed. But our party, not being capable of appreciating such sacredness, added several of these "Possessions in the Happy Hunting Grounds" to our collections. For two days we were kept on this island, but the morning of the third day we crossed to the main land, and by keeping well in shore, crossing from one point of land to another, made very good progress, and in three days more ran into the mouth of Buffalo River, where we pitched our tent and put out the net as fish seemed to be abundant. A good catch was taken which proved to be suckers, and we traded them to the natives to feed to their dogs.

The next day we reached the Hay River, which is only twenty miles from the west end of the lake, and pushing on we reached the Mackenzie River the same night. Navigation was now good, as this river is deep and nearly a mile wide. The Mackenzie is one of the grandest streams in the Northwest. Sir Alexander Mackenzie, whose name is written in broad characters across the annals of the Northwest, discovered this river in the year 1789, and during the same year undertook the exploration of this great water course from Great Slave Lake north to the Arctic Ocean. He was accompanied on this trip by eight men and seven women, with four canoes arranged as follows: A German and four Canadians with their wives in the first; the second was occupied by a northern Indian called English Chief, who was accompanied by his two wives; the third was taken up by two sturdy young

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savages who served in the double capacity of hunters and interpreters; while the fourth was laden with provisions, clothing, ammunition, and various articles designed as presents to the Indians. On the 12th day of July this intrepid young Scotch explorer reached the arm of the Arctic Ocean, into which the river discharges its waters, and the sight he saw was just what is to be seen to-day. They continued their course to the western extremity of a high island, and then found it impossible to proceed farther. On landing at a deserted Eskimo encampment they found pieces of whalebone, and saw where the train oil had been spilt, but the red fox, the reindeer, flocks of beautiful plover, some venerable white owls, and several seagulls were the only natives. But Mackenzie knew that he had triumphed, for as he stood on the promontory of Whale Island he caught sight of a shoal of those marine monsters from which the island receives its name.

Fort Providence was passed seventy miles down stream, but the water was swift and the wind favorable, and we did not stop. At Fort Simpson the Laird River empties into the Mackenzie, and many flattering reports came to us of the rich gold strikes several miles up the river. Consequently all the miners turned up the Laird River and we were left to pursue our journey alone. Our place of destination had been decided upon before leaving civilization, and we could not be persuaded to change our plans. Our hearts were set on a certain location at the headwaters of the Old Crow River, along the foothills of the Davidson Moun-

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tains, lying between the Arctic Coast and the Porcupine River. And our chart told us that a crossing could easily be effected by way of Rat River and McDougal Pass, with a portage of only half a mile. But in case this did not prove advisable, we expected to continue our course to the Arctic Ocean and enter some of the rivers flowing from the mountains, and from there make our way across with dog teams during the coming winter.

On reaching the Nahannie River we observed that the water seemed alive with large fish, which were making the water fly as they sported about. Thinking to make a good haul we took one end of our net in the skiff, and making a little detour we used it as a seine and quickly drew it to shore. I never felt such heavy tugging at a net, and we flattered ourselves that we were taking a big catch. But as we drew near shore it became lighter, and on landing a sorry sight met our gaze; the net was torn with holes of all sizes and completely ruined, while entangled in its meshes were two swordfish about five feet in length. We had attacked a school of swordfish, and it cost us our net.

Game was now abundant, and many Indians were met with from time to time, who supplied us with fresh meat, fish, moccasins, and fur. They also furnished us with fresh blueberries, which grew on the southern side of the mountains thereabouts, and which were greatly appreciated by us. In exchange we gave them tea, a little flour, and some tobacco, which were greatly appreciated by them. Passing Fort Wrigley, we soon arrived at Fort Norman, where the Bear River

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

empties into the Mackenzie. Here we first met with the Hare Indians, so called from the numerous hares that inhabit the vicinity of Bear Lake, and the skins of which are much used by the natives for clothing.

Our party had on the 15th of July crossed the Arctic Circle, near Fort Norman, and was now pressing on toward our journey's end. Great cakes of ice could be seen along shore, left there in early summer, when the ice had broken up and gorged the river, causing it to overflow its banks. Vegetation now became more dwarfed and stunted, and the river bed became wider, with low, marshy banks on either side. Far ahead could be seen the upper ramparts with their perpendicular walls of solid rock, through which the river rushed and tumbled in its haste to reach the ocean, while off to the left could be seen the northern spur of the Rocky Mountains, with their snow-capped peaks glistening in the sunlight.

On reaching the upper ramparts, which are located near the foot of the mountain, we decided to camp for a day and make a trip into the mountains for the purpose of procuring a supply of fresh blueberries, and possibly get a shot at mountain sheep, having observed several fine specimens of the Big Horn family while coming down the stream, but always too far away for a shot. It was early in the day when we set out with rifles and a pail well filled with lunch. We found that the mountains, though appearing but a short distance away, were not reached until nearly noon. We picked a few berries, ate our lunch, and while



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the rest of the party laid down for a short rest, I, eager to get the first shot, started up the mountain-side. For an hour I climbed up, following the ravines and washouts, without seeing any sign of the wily game; finally reaching a level spot, I sat down and took in the surroundings. Far below, a small wreath of smoke curling upward marked the spot where we had eaten our noonday lunch; the men, appearing like midgets, could be seen lingering near the fire. Putting my hands to my mouth I shouted, "Hello!" but the sound of my voice failed to reach them, although I continued to shout for several minutes. Looking to the eastward, I could discern a small lake, from which a winding stream flowed out toward the river. Patches of scrub timber and thick buckthorn brush and briars could be seen in the lowlands, but higher up the mountain-side the bare rocks glistened as the water trickled over them from the melting snow which covered the crest of the mountain.

Casting my eyes carefully along the mountain ridge, my heart gave a bound as I beheld against the interminable whiteness five mountain sheep standing apparently watching my maneuvers. A high, rocky ledge prevented a nearer approach, and casting about for a moment I soon discovered a ravine or watercourse some distance away, leading up directly to where the game was standing. Crouching low, I made my way with all possible speed and reached the ravine in a few moments. I was now hidden entirely from view, and made my way as fast as possible toward the top.

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It was a toilsome climb, but my courage was up and I did not halt until I had reached the summit. Peering about in all directions, I saw that my game had for some reason moved farther away, probably having winded me, and was now out of reach of my rifle. As I peered about, I seemed to have entered a new world; snow lay all about me. The top of the mountain was level for acres around, which was completely cut up by the sharp hoofs of the Big Horn while feeding on the moss which covers the rocks. The air was cold and crisp, although the sun was shining bright, and a feeling of exhaustion came over me, caused by the high altitude. Resting a few moments, I again started in pursuit. I could plainly see they were watching my movements, and turning my face the other way, I made a detour, but all the while walking sidewise and approaching nearer at every step. As there was no place of concealment, I decided to keep drawing nearer until within gunshot, or until they ran to a more favorable spot to be reached. I was nearly within shooting distance when I saw the leader spring into the air and strike the ground stiff-legged, a performance which was repeated several times, and then they followed their leader and went bounding down the side of the mountain. Raising my rifle to my shoulder, I fired several shots, but the distance was too great, for they continued to run and were soon lost in the fog that suddenly enveloped the whole side of the mountain below the snow line. I continued to survey this great table with its snow-



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white covering, when suddenly the thought came to me that it must be nearly night and I was a long way from camp. On looking at my watch for the first time, I found it to be eight o'clock. The sun, while still above the horizon, was veiled by a cloud of mist, and with all haste I started to retrace my steps. I had only gone a short distance when new objects appeared before me, so changing my course, I hastened to descend at the nearest point, but on consulting my compass, found that I was going in the opposite direction from where our camp was supposed to be. In vain I looked for some ravine or indenture in which to descend, but all along the ledge was perpendicular rock. I started on a run, and finally came to a place where the shell rock had been carried down by a recent snowslide, leaving a depression, and down this I hurried. As I began to descend, darkness gathered round me, and I soon found myself completely enveloped in a thick fog and could scarcely see any distance before me. A heavy mist was falling, and low, muttering thunder could be heard, accompanied with flashes of lightning. I carefully picked my way, but received many falls by stepping on the loose shell rock, which gave way under my weight. For hours I kept on, and it seemed I never would reach the foothills. A heavy rain was now falling, and I was wet to the skin. I could not see the hand to my compass, and had no idea which way to go when I reached the foot of the mountain. I endeavored to strike a light, but my matches were wet and useless. In a blind way I wan-

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dered on. Then the thought came to me of my companions, and if they were still waiting they might hear a shot, and acting accordingly, I discharged my rifle several times in quick succession. I then listened, but no answer could be heard. My heart sank within me. I was lost. Two thousand miles from civilization, with a prospect of spending the night in this wild country, with no protection, were the thoughts that came rushing through my brain. I stopped and tried to reason, but the situation was beyond my power to solve. For the first time I realized that I was chilled and that ice was forming upon my clothing. I must keep moving, and blindly hurried on. Soon I came to a deep ravine and could hear the water rushing along; a new thought flashed into my mind. By following down stream I might reach the river into which the stream no doubt emptied. Placing my hand in the water to ascertain which way it flowed, I immediately began to follow its course. My progress was much impeded by rocks and brier bushes, but for hours I kept on until suddenly the stream widened, and I found myself wading nearly knee-deep in water. A bright flash of lightning revealed my situation; I was standing out several yards into a lake; it was the one I had observed from the rocky ledge. Retracing my steps until again on land, I stopped to reflect, and if possible to locate my position, when suddenly I was aroused from my reverie by a sound that caused my heart to jump and my blood to curdle in my veins. Again it came echoing down from the mountains, a long drawn-

## FORT RESOLUTION

out howl. I could not be mistaken, for many times before I had heard that same plaintive howl when safely in camp, and had heard the natives tell heart-rending stories of the lives destroyed by these large timber wolves of the coast mountains. Again the sound came, louder than before, and immediately an answering howl from high up in the mountains. I started on a run around the lake, filling the magazine of my rifle with cartridges as I ran. On I rushed, stumbling over rocks and brushwood in my great fright. The sound came nearer and nearer, until it seemed to me that the mountains were filled with wolves, coming after me as fast as possible. I now gave myself up as lost, but determined to fight until the last. My belt was still well-filled with cartridges, and my "44.40 Marlin" could be relied upon. If it were only daylight, but the thick fog and darkness were against me.

I had been a professed Christian for years, and now the end had come, would my faith still hold? I was not afraid to die, but O! such a death. The thoughts of my loved ones came before me—my loving wife, who would never know; my only daughter, who had given me the little Bible when I left home; my two sons, who would be looking for father to come back, and the suspense of all that waiting. I lifted my heart to God in earnest prayer for deliverance, and the solemn vow of that awful moment is known only to Him. The foremost of the pack was now within a few yards of me, and I could hear their feet splashing

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through the water. I raised my rifle and fired in the direction of the oncoming pack, but they did not stop. I could now discern dark objects moving swiftly toward me, but the howling ceased except from those farther back on the trail. I fired until my cartridges were nearly exhausted. Several times my fire was followed by a yelp of pain, assuring me that my aim had not gone amiss. During this battling I had been moving backwards, and now found myself backed up against a large clump of buckthorn bushes. I could go no farther. The fangs of the whole pack were snapping all about me. But one single cartridge remained in the magazine of my rifle; I must make that one count. Taking deliberate aim, I fired at the nearest, and then sprang recklessly into the thicket of thorns. Suddenly from out of the center of the thorn patch sprang a large buck caribou, and with a shake of his great antlers he bounded away toward the mountains with the whole pack in hot pursuit. I struggled out of the thorns, scratching and tearing my flesh and clothing, and started on a run. I could still hear the howling of the wolves, but they were moving back toward the mountains, and I exerted all my remaining strength in putting the greatest distance possible between us. Soon several shots were heard in quick succession, and I knew I was being sought for by my companions. I shouted with all my might, and soon the sonorous voice of Jack was heard off to the westward. I hastened in the direction of the voice, when I was suddenly startled by some animal that came

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bounding toward me. Fortunately my last cartridge was gone, for the next moment our faithful "Sport" came springing up before me, barking and whining a doggish welcome. We reached camp at two o'clock in the morning, where we remained until I was again able to travel, for the experience of that night had nearly caused nervous prostration. But I have never ceased to be grateful to my Heavenly Father for so miraculously delivering me from death by timber wolves.

## VI

# In the Land of the Midnight Sun

### WE FIRST MEET WITH THE ESKIMO

PASSING Fort Good Hope, we reached the Red River, into which we rowed, and pitching our tent, spent several days in fishing and trading with the natives. Here we met with the Loucheux or Mountain Indian, from whom we procured moccasins, snowshoes, several skins, and four dogs. They appeared very intelligent, speaking English quite well, and gave us much valuable information concerning the route across the Porcupine River, adding that such a trip was impossible at that season of the year. The goods, they informed us, must all be portaged for thirty miles with dogsleds during the winter. The Red River is noted on account of the abundance of fish taken from its waters. Many of the natives were here engaged in catching and drying fish on which to winter their dogs.

Pushing on, we soon reached the Peel River, where we camped for several days. This is the direct water-course from Fort McPherson to the Arctic Ocean. Fort McPherson is the terminus of the Hudson's Bay Company's route, and is the last trading post reached by their steamers. Many boatloads of Eskimos from

## IN THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

the Arctic Coast were now seen, rowing their long skin boats up stream, loaded with fur, to meet the traders which arrive at this season of each year by the Hudson's Bay Company's steamer. We could only communicate with them by signs, but succeeded in trading tea, tobacco, sugar, and calico for moccasins, several deer skins, and two Husky dogs.

Vegetation was now growing rarer, and the stunted growth of shrubs and briers as we journeyed northward denoted the proximity of the ocean. The nights were illuminated by the incessant light of the sun, which enabled us to continue our navigation by day and night. Pushing on, we soon reached the delta of the Mackenzie, with the great Arctic Ocean before us. As far as the eye could reach, huge ice floes floated upon its surface. No signs of vegetable life existed along the barren coast, and the vastness and weirdness of the wonderful light effect cast over ice and sky intensified the loneliness of our condition. Crossing the lagoon, we continued our course along the south coast, dodging the icebergs that were ever revolving, threatening our trail boat with sudden destruction, while their thundering and booming were deafening to our ears. Many seals were observed rearing their sleek, shining forms nearly out of the water and turning their heads quickly each way, with eyes almost human, seeming to wonder at our abrupt intrusion into their element. For three days and nights we battled with the waves, unable to land on account of the rocky coast, against which the breakers dashed high and fiercely. But on



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the morning of August 12th we rounded Kay Point and entered the Babbage River, expecting to reach the head waters of this stream before stopping, but the water was swift, and cold weather was coming on, so we decided to winter near the coast, and accordingly we cast about for a suitable location for our winter quarters. Rowing up this river about two miles, we discovered a small stream of fresh water flowing in from the south. Here the river widened, forming a small bay, the shore of which was piled high with driftwood. This, then, was the place nature had provided for our Arctic abode. Cutting away the turf, we made an excavation several feet deep near the foot of a southern slope and began building our cabin. Logs of driftwood were cut and fitted into place, and the cracks chinked with moss, and the roof covered with turf and dirt.

We soon discovered that we were not the sole occupants of the bluff, for scores of marmots (somewhat resembling the prairie dog) could be seen scampering from one hiding place to another, or sitting bolt upright at the top of their burrows, chattering and scolding at us for trespassing upon their rights. In a short time the cabin was finished, the scow drawn up close to the bank, and all our goods transferred to our new home, which we christened "Marmot Hill."

We had not met with any Indians since we left Peel River, but were warmly and hilariously greeted by the natives of the coast, who met us as we landed at Kay Point, shouting and gesticulating in the wildest



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excitement. But while they appeared kind and obliging, they could give us no information, being unable to speak a word of English, and it was only by signs that we could make ourselves partially understood.

Dried fish and seal oil were set before us in great abundance, and with all hospitality and honor of the native custom, but we refused with as good grace as possible, whereat the whole company set to and soon the last vestige disappeared like magic down their throats. Afterwards, when climbing the rugged mountains, without wood to burn, hungry and footsore, how gladly we would have accepted even a meal of frozen fish! In a few days the snow began to fall, and soon covered us completely, making our cabin as warm and comfortable as if we were in our Southern home. The news of white men on the coast soon reached the neighboring tribes, and in a short time no less than a dozen snow huts were constructed and occupied undesirably near us. Men, women, and children swarmed around our cabin, and scores of thieving dogs made the nights hideous with their wolf-like howls. We soon learned enough of their language to ascertain that white men were wintering on an island several miles away, but who they were we could only conjecture. We now adopted the native dress, an outfit which, if not wholly elegant, was certainly comfortable. Our well-heated cabin did not call for more than ordinary warm clothing, but the atmosphere outside, ranging from twenty-five to thirty degrees below zero, demanded fur and fur only. For four long winter months we dwelt thus

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among the Eskimo, often engaging in their caribou hunting and seal-catching exploits, as well as shooting the Arctic grouse that frequent the inland gulches in great numbers. Seals are the common feature of the Arctic Ocean, although found in every sea. These animals make the dreary life of the Eskimo a possibility. They not only furnish food for his table, oil for his lamp, clothing for his person, but even the bones and skins supply material for his boats and summer tents. The skin of the hair seal is covered with a short, bristly fur, some species having bizarre markings which appear very beautiful as they glisten in the sunlight. Among all the members of the phocine family, there is probably none that present a more beautiful and grotesque appearance than the spotted or ringed seal, found near East Cape. The skin of this seal, which shines like silver, is much prized by the natives, and also brings a fair price in our market. Fortunately we were successful in capturing several of these, which added a number of fine skins to our collection.

One peculiarity of the spotted seal is the habit of building a snow hut over the breathing holes, which they provide for themselves in the ice, resembling an Eskimo igloo. On breaking into some of these huts we would sometimes find one or more young seals lying on the ice near the breathing holes. Whether these huts are built expressly to protect their young or not, I can not tell, but only the young of the spotted seal were found inside, while scores of other young ones were found entirely unprotected.

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These "pup seal," as they are called by the Arctic whalers, are generally found near the open water. They are very helpless, and when approached by us would turn their heads and stare at us with their large, human-like eyes, at the same time making no effort to get out of our reach. They appear to have the greatest dread of the water, and when pushed toward it set up a plaintive cry like a baby. Their skin is covered with a thick wool, like a young lamb. One of our men put one of the pup seals into the water, where it struggled and cried, the water soaking into its wool until it began to sink, and I have no doubt would have drowned if it had not been rescued from the water.

At two months old they begin to shed their wool coat and the slick hair begins to take its place. It is then that the mother seal begins to force her young into the water, which they resist at first, and at night their cries can be heard for miles.

The skin of the pup seal is much valued by dwellers of the coast for trimming and linings for their coats and hoods.

Seals in the Arctic are captured in summer by means of long nets made of walrus skins, stretched along the edge of the open water and just beneath its surface. And in winter they are shot or speared through the ice as they come to their breathing holes. They are very wary, and as they raise their heads out of the water and turn to look each way; their movements are so quick that only the best and quickest

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marksman can get a shot before they have again disappeared. But when one ventures out on the ice, others will follow without hesitation. The Eskimo (who well understands their habits), having killed a seal, immediately cuts off the feet and, after attaching them to a long pole, shoves them along on the ice close to the water, turning them this way and that to imitate a live seal. Another seal, coming near the hole, hears the noise and, seeing the feet near the edge, fearlessly rears his head above the water, when the spear quickly ends his career. Polar bears are often seen standing near these holes, with one forepaw extended close to the edge and the other raised to give the deathblow, the pure white of their fur matching so admirably with the interminable whiteness of their surroundings as to make it most difficult for an unpracticed eye to see them.

As Christmas time drew near, a good supply of provisions had been laid in with a view to giving our dusky neighbors a white man's dinner. But an unlooked-for turn of affairs changed our plans and gave us all a pleasant surprise. During one of these dark days (the sun had now ceased to shine, a dim twilight continuing through the sky), we heard sleigh-bells at the door and the natives shouting at the top of their voices. Rushing out, imagine our surprise at seeing several white men, snugly wrapped in furs, with sledges drawn by a score or more of dogs, driving up to our door. The sight of white men brought a shout from our lips, and the welcome and hearty handshakes extended equaled the greetings of our demon-

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strative Eskimo neighbors. The strangers, who now made themselves known, were no less than the Rev. I. O. Stringer, a missionary at Herschel Island; A. J. Stone, an Arctic explorer in the interest of the American Museum of Natural History, with his guides, and two members of a whaling crew, who, with their vessel, the *Mary D. Hume*, were wintering at Herschel Island. The missionary, having heard of us through the natives, had driven over to invite us to spend the holidays at the island, saying that they were going to give a Christmas dinner to all the inhabitants of the island and coast. This announcement surprised us greatly. To feed a multitude in that barren region, two thousand miles from civilization, in the dead of winter, seemed miraculous. Besides, we had thoroughly demonstrated this fact concerning the Eskimo, that their power to subsist without food is certainly outdone by their capacity for consuming it when the occasion offers. The invitation was, however, gladly accepted, and the day passed quickly and pleasantly.

Mr. Stone, who had been stopping a few weeks at the island, was returning to his headquarters at Fort McPherson. His experience is an interesting one. Mr. Stringer had for several years been stationed at Peel River, among the Loucheux Indians, but recently came to Herschel Island to work among the coast natives, who are probably the most uncivilized class of people in all this northern region. He had learned their language, and was striving to lay the foundation for a Christian civilization.

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Many occupants of this island had proved themselves to be apt pupils and could speak the English language quite intelligently, while not a few had embraced the Christian religion and attended regularly the services held at the Stringer Mission. Mr. Stringer, while acting as a missionary, was both teacher and preacher. The mission being supported entirely by the Church of England, and friends living at Toronto, Canada.

## VII

### An Arctic Christmas

THE DARK DAYS—SUPERSTITION—LOVE MAKING—  
ESKIMO LIFE.

CHRISTMAS comes to the fields of ice and snow as surely as it comes to the land of flowers. But not a Christmas of chiming bells, illuminated churches, and happy children. Out on the drifting ice-floes that break in the wind and current, the Polar bear growls and fights over a seal that he has caught, or the stranded carcass of a giant bowhead. And in the mountains, the home of the caribou and reindeer, the wolves are plotting for their holiday feast, while the adventurous traveler, facing the icy wind, tingles at its touch, and shivers as he thinks of his Southern home. Not so with the Eskimo who dwells on the Arctic coast. We gaze with wonder and perhaps disgust on a race of beings with human faculties and instincts, whose happiness consists in the possession of a warm garment, a feed of the ouk-chuck (blubber), and shelter from the extreme severity of the weather, be that shelter only a friendly snowbank. Still, these people laugh and grow fat amid the hardships and privations of a life



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which is theirs by necessity from the time when, strapped under their mother's "artiga," or poked away among the loose deer skins in the bottom of the canoe, they start on their first trip, until too old to travel or work, a burden to themselves and fellows, they are left in the deserted igloo to die.

The time was now spent in preparation for our trip to the island. The sledges were put in readiness, the dog harness repaired, and the camps broken up, for when an Eskimo travels he takes all his possessions with him. Just at night the train was ready to start. The sky shaded from a light blue to a deep dark purple at the horizon. A beautiful aurora swayed its great ribbon-like folds gracefully above us, as if stirred by a breeze. A brilliant electrical display tipped the royal purple of the North, as if in preparation for the festivities of the season. The moon shone forth clear and bright as the runners took their places at the head of the pack, and with a babel of shouts and the cracking of many whips, away we went over the frosty snow and ice. While the little ones are tucked away among the warm fur robes, the rest of the family are expected to travel on foot, and it is no uncommon sight to see a mother running ahead of the dogs for hours at a time with a child strapped to her back. Their power of endurance seems almost incredible. For several hours we followed the coast, stopping now and then to shift a load or adjust a harness, while the shouts of the youngsters and the yelping of the dogs echoed and re-echoed through the adjacent hills. The speed



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of the pack now began to increase, and with quick, sharp yelps they were away like the wind, leaving us far in the distance. The natives, too, seemed imbued with new life, and started off at a brisk trot. We followed on, and soon saw the whole train crowding around some dark object that loomed up before us like a huge sand-bar. On coming closer it proved to be the carcass of a large bowhead whale, stranded on the beach, which we learned had long been a feeding place for the natives, great chunks of blubber having been cut off and eaten raw, alike by men, women, children, and dogs. Our party declined an invitation to partake, and, after a short rest, changed our course and started across the ice directly toward the island. The cold was intense, and our great fur hoods, turned up and nearly covering our faces, served to keep out the frost. On reaching the island we observed the steam whaling vessel *Mary D. Hume* lying in a little sheltered cove, securely imbedded in the thickness of seven or eight feet of ice, and protected by a heavy snow embankment, above which spars and rigging stood out black and rigid against the surrounding and interminable whiteness. On every side and stretching into the far distance, land and ice merged in one, with no dividing line to mark where one ended and the other began.

The inhabitants of the island turned out en masse to meet us, and while the natives turned into the already overcrowded igloos, we were welcomed by Mr. Stringer and Captain Hagerty, and were soon en-

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

sconced in the comfortable home of the former. The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Stringer, with their two-year-old daughter Rowena, a little golden-locks, who is the sunshine of the household and a very sweet child. The natives call her "The White Fox."

After partaking of a most appetizing meal, we were shown to our several couches, for day and night are all the same in the Polar regions at this season of the year. On awakening we found great preparations in progress. The warehouse, adjoining the dwelling, was the receptacle for scores of ducks and grouse, all nicely plucked and ready for the oven, while several natives with dogs and sleds were busy hauling saddles of deer meat or caribou from an adjacent icehouse some distance away. Mounting the huge sled, we were quickly conveyed to the bluff where the icehouse had been constructed. It was an excavation in the frozen earth about eight feet below the surface, forming a large, square room, while the framework, covered with dirt, constituted the roof. The ground being continually frozen, this cooler requires no ice and is always at the freezing point. Our host lighted a tallow dip and, leading the way, we followed him into this underground refrigerator. What a sight met our gaze! Saddles of caribou and mountain sheep occupied nearly half the space, while wild fowl of every description were piled high against the frosty wall; white brant and several varieties of swan were found among the number, whose frozen bodies rattled about like rocks upon the floor. Fish of every size, from both salt and



REV. I. O. STRINGER,  
Missionary at Herschel Island, N. W. T., with his family.



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fresh water, were frozen in solid masses. On top of the fish rested the carcasses of several seals in life-like positions. The missionary explained to us how he had taken advantage of the season by sending the natives out to hunt and fish, and many of them were now without sufficient food, had supplied them from time to time as necessity required.

The Eskimo lives only for to-day, making but little preparation for the future. As the dinner was to be served on Christmas Eve (the next day being Sunday), preparations were now pushed forward to completion. Mottoes decorated the walls, while drawings of suitable design and highly-colored hung in profusion all about the room where the natives were to dine. The kitchen was a scene of busy bustle, and here the culinary skill of our hostess was wonderfully displayed. As the day advanced, bands of visiting Eskimos gathered in from different points along the coast and soon filled the room that was fitted up for their reception, and sitting on benches and boxes, or squatting on the floor, as is their custom, patiently awaited their turn. "All things are now ready and the multitude is at hand." And as the twenty whites first surrounded the long, rude table covered with the whitest of linen and groaning under its precious load, we wonder if this is really the barren, desolate Polar region of which we have so often read. Caribou steak, roast mutton, pickled deer tongue, broiled liver, roast duck with dressing, fish and oysters, potatoes and peas, fruit cake, pyramid cake, and plum pudding with sauce,

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

were the viands that graced this Christmas feast. As the white men arose from the table, missionary and miner, captain and crew, each turned waiter and proceeded to serve their dusky brethren. As every native carries a belt knife, the victuals were set before them in pots and kettles, plates and forks being of little use to them. They first take a chunk of meat in the left hand and, after biting into it, quickly cut off the mouthful close to the lips with great dexterity. The bread and cake were eaten in the same way. It was a sight, indeed, to watch them eat. The amount consumed by one individual is astonishing. As they would occasionally stop to wipe the perspiration from their greasy faces, the word "Ne-ko-ruk!" (good) would pass from one to another with such earnestness that left no doubt as to their enjoyment. Four times that room was cleared and refilled, until no less than fivescore had eaten of the good things prepared for them. At the close a giant box of raisins was distributed among the little folks, and the shouts of joy that followed caused a smile of satisfaction to pass over the face of the good missionary and kindly helpmate, who proceeded to further amuse them with magic-lantern views, until "Gal-la!" (astonishing) and "i-de-gah" (beautiful) resounded through the room from scores of voices. But all things must have an end, and as we recall the many incidents of our life in the Polar regions, one of the brightest spots in all our travels was that Christmas in the Arctic.

Herschel Island is twenty-eight miles out in the



## AN ARCTIC CHRISTMAS

Arctic Ocean, and is seven miles long and two miles wide, and lies directly north of the boundary line between Alaska and the Northwest Territory.

The sun had by this time vanished entirely and the long night had begun, but the moon, now continually visible, gave forth a soft, silvery light. The natives who came to spend Christmas at the island continued to stay and the snow huts increased in number, until the place became a good-sized village. It will be remembered that on the 27th day of December, 1898, there was a total eclipse of the moon visible in the Arctic region, which began to appear at 2 P. M., and lasted nearly two hours. Like our own Indians, the Eskimo is very superstitious, and although they appear most friendly disposed, you are never quite sure of them, because one never knows at what they may take offense, and when they do so they are cruel and treacherous, and would not hesitate to do you bodily harm.

As the moon began to disappear and darkness came on, the natives became much alarmed and began running around in great consternation. Some of the older ones came to us and asked if the moon was sick, and intimated that our coming among them had probably displeased the Great Spirit, thus causing this phenomenon. We told them that the Great Father, whom the missionary had told them about, was angry with them for not embracing the true religion. On hearing this they all flocked to the missionary and asked him to tell the Father to uncover the moon and they would all

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become good Christians. It was now as dark as the darkest night, the candles were lighted at the mission, and all watched with eagerness for the reappearing of the moon. As the first ring of light appeared the natives came out of their huts, where they had hidden themselves, and began to gather into groups, and as fear gave way to mirth, shouts and laughter could be heard all over the village. That night there was great rejoicing and dancing the hoola-hoola and pounding of the tom-toms in some of the large huts where they had congregated. However, as some of the older and wiser of the chiefs could remember a long time ago when a similar occurrence had taken place, and as no evil results had followed at that time, they soon forgot their promise to the good missionary.

During my stay at this island I accompanied a party of Eskimos on a seal hunt several miles out. Upon arriving at open water, several small holes were seen in the thin ice. The dogs were fastened to a block of ice, and then, with harpoon in hand, each native stood intently listening. Soon the breathing of a seal was heard several rods to the left of us, puffing like a steam jet through one of the small openings in the ice. A native now crept slowly and quietly to the spot, and as the animal again blew he sent the harpoon through his wriggling victim, while the other natives clipped the ice about the hole until it was large enough to drag the seal out and place it upon the sled. The whole night was spent in a successful catch, and the hunters returned with heavily-laden sledges. They



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were now dressed and distributed, preparatory to the great feast. For nearly a month they ate, drank, and slept heartily, which means perfect happiness to an Eskimo. In fact, this is typical Eskimo life. They are satisfied and contented while food lasts, but it is not until the last morsel is gone that they begin a serious hunt.

While at Herschel Island we succeeded in procuring several fine Husky dogs, which, added to those we already possessed, made a splendid sled-team capable of hauling sufficient outfit for our mountain trip. Returning to Marmot Hill, we found everything as we had left it, although many new huts had been added to our thriving village.

On January 23d the sun rose after an absence of forty-two days, and as the golden rays darted from rocky peak to peak the lethargy of the inhabitants of our snow village gave place to a boundless enthusiasm. During the long dark season they had slept much, and a death-like stillness seemed to hover over the whole village, but with the returning sun, men, women, and children suddenly awakened from their long drowsiness, and the scene of silence was quickly transformed into one of hilarity. They rolled in the snow and played football with each other, laughing, jumping, howling, and indulging in all sorts of childish sports. Soon the men began sharpening their weapons, preparatory to another hunt. The women became more agreeable in their attitude toward the men. The Hoola-hoola dance almost constantly engaged their at-

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tention, and by a charm of manner and a fascinating run of conversation peculiar to this time of year, they made themselves as lovably attractive as possible. Marital relations are always easy in Eskimo land, and at this period all matrimonial bonds are broken, love-making progresses with the advance of daylight, and by the time the sun has risen well above the horizon the young people are all mated, and some of the older ones re-mated. The snow village is now abandoned, new tents erected, and various families with their dependents seek new delights in other places. Thus new villages spring up each year. The family relation changes, the food changes, the ambitions and emotions are changed—in a word, change is the law of Arctic life. During the balance of the year the women are the slaves of the men. The drudgery of the housework, the dressing of the skins and making of clothing, the preparation of game, and indeed most of the hard and uninteresting tasks fall to woman's lot, while her master, man, follows the chase far afield.

The difference between the Eskimo and the Indian tribes who inhabit the northwestern latitudes is very strongly marked. As all who have given attention to the subject know, a perfect chaos of races is to be found among the Indians of British Columbia and Alaska, and their language is polyglot, the result seemingly of innumerable migrations from Malayan and Mongolian sources in Asia crossing the straits at different times. While differing in many ways from each other, the Indians have always been turbulent and ex-



*"We succeeded in procuring several fine Husky dogs."*



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citable. The Eskimo of the Arctic Coast and Alaska are also Mongolian in their origin, but probably of a more recent immigration. Dressed in deer skin and sealskin clothing, they look quite picturesque, but their "labrits" give the males a grotesque appearance. These are wedges of ivory which they insert into their lips in childhood, a process as painful as it is degrading. The Eskimo resembles the Chinese in many ways. One notes the bloated, flat face, black hair, small hands and feet, a certain listlessness in traveling, together with other traits and mannerisms which are characteristic of the Chinese. The women are very comely when free from grease and dirt, very submissive to their men, very tender to their children after they arrive at a certain age, and indefatigable in the making of gew-gaws with which they endeavor to please the men and children. The Eskimo own no manner of government or subordination. The father or head of the family obeys no superior, he gives advice or opinions only; consequently it is rarely that a great chief is to be found among them, although they invariably select a leader when on their hunting or trading expeditions, yielding him implicit and voluntary obedience. They live largely on the products of the sea, but the great herd of caribou inhabiting the coast mountains in large numbers afford one of the principal articles of food. There is seldom a scarcity of food, for wild fowl, ptarmigan grouse, and marmot are plentiful; there are also several kinds of bear and occasionally, but not often, musk ox. Although some Eskimo cus-

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toms seem brutal to us, nevertheless in their relations to each other and to the rest of mankind they are frequently most humane. They have a deep sense of honor, a wholesome regard for the rights of their fellows, cheating and lying being very rare. Morally, even when measured by our own standard, they are superior to many of the white invaders of their land. In fact, it is common practice for captains and mates of whaling vessels (spending from one to three years in the Arctic) to take to themselves wives bought from the coast tribes, usually girls from fifteen to eighteen years of age, who make their home on board ship, being left during the whaling season at the winter quarters of the crew, where they are supplied with every possible luxury. Under ordinary circumstances the Eskimo would have large families, but the mothers, especially at the time of childbirth, receive no care or attention, with the result that only one child out of several will live, and with habitual carelessness of this people in the matter of infantile life, the race does not increase, but on the contrary (aided, no doubt, by the ever-debilitating effect of contact with the white man's civilization), it is rapidly diminishing in numbers. To me one of the most interesting problems of Eskimo life is involved in the attempt to study in each man the mainspring of his ambition. It must, indeed, take a strong spark to fire the furnace of human effort against the unrelenting odds of the Polar elements. Diseases of various kinds are very prevalent, and severe colds frequently develop into pneumonia and cut off

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large numbers. The Eskimo, isolated from all the rest of the world by stormy, ice-encumbered waters and an overland sea of ice and snow, have usually been regarded as dwarfs mentally, physically, and morally, and their manner of life generally viewed with disgust. While this estimation of them is not without some foundation, Northern travelers and explorers have found that the Eskimo customs and habits of life are far superior to those of the white men in the Arctic, that they invariably adopt their mode of life. They wear Eskimo clothing, use Eskimo tactics in hunting, travel with Eskimo sledges and dogs, and even eat Eskimo food. During the first few months of summer, when the heat of the sun sends glacial streams in torrents from the icy heights, they live in tents or huts covered with skins, but for the long winter months they construct a hut with blocks of snow cut from the solid banks, or when the solid snow is not convenient, a house is often built of rocks and covered with sticks and turf.

During the month of February our Eskimo guide, whose name was Munichuk, and who was one of the best trappers along the coast, set out a line of traps along the foot of the bluffs lying between the cabin and the ocean, and was rewarded by a successful catch of fine fur. White Arctic foxes are very numerous along the coast, also the valuable blue fox, so much sought after. In addition to these, the cross fox, the silver gray, and often the black fox can be found, but the latter, although considered the most valuable, are

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seldom taken in traps. The large gray wolf is found in great numbers along the timber line and in the coast mountains. In my opinion, it is a cross between this wolf and the Eskimo dog of Greenland that produces the famous Husky dogs which have proven so valuable in the Klondike country as a means of transportation.



## VIII

### Caribou

THE COMING OF TOO-ROOK—WE PURCHASE TO-  
HOOLA — JEALOUSY — DEATH OF KO-LE-NA'S  
BABY.

THE wild primeval desolation of the "Frozen North-land" and vast voiceless solitudes, except where the silence is broken by some wild creature, have an inexpressible charm. You feel that you stand on a portion of the earth's surface which has known no change for centuries, a land which may remain in its natural condition for centuries to come.

Herds of the lordly species of the reindeer family roam over the coast mountains and shorelands of the Arctic Sea where the foot of man has never trod. Soon after the birth of their young in the spring, the Caribou begin migrating north and west. For ages they have been following the same tracks, and the stones along their runways have been worn smooth by generations of hoofs. The caribou is an expert swimmer, and crosses streams and broad lakes on their summer pilgrimages. It is no uncommon sight while navigating the broad Mackenzie to see its surface bristling with a

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

dozen pair of antlers where a herd of caribou were swimming from shore to shore. In the fall, from the end of September, the deer return to their winter quarters. When crossing the ice they lift their feet like high-stepping horses, often over three or four feet of snow at each step. Nothing slackens them, on they go, never letting up. In these migrations the whole herd amount frequently to one thousand or more, and are separated into smaller herds as chance or fear may determine them to unite or separate. In the barren lands the chief food of this species is the various lichens or mosses; the dry grass found in the swamps during the autumn is also eaten, and below the timber line the mosses attached to the trees. The caribou has branched, recurved antlers, the summit of which are palmated; the antlers of the male being much larger than those of the female. These antlers, which are usually shed and renewed by both sexes, are remarkable for the size of the branch which comes out near the base—called the brow antler. Caribou are shot or killed with heavy spears having points made of flint or bluestone, which the natives throw with great skill. Hid behind some boulder or crevice in the rock, they await the coming herd and slaughter them without mercy. But they never hunt with dogs—the Eskimo dog is unfit for this purpose, and would frighten the caribou all away. As the ice and snow begin to melt in the spring, thousands of caribou may be seen coming to the seacoast, where the tableland between the coast mountains and the ocean is covered with deep, soft moss.

## CARIBOU

The females in large droves appear several weeks in advance of the males, and as soon as their young ones are strong enough to travel the whole herd start on their annual tramp over the barren mountains. As the days began to lengthen, the snow village at Marmot Hill took on a new aspect. Each day witnessed new arrivals, and old ones were constantly leaving for more favorable localities. Among those to arrive was an old chief named Too-rook, with his wife and two boys and a baby girl. They came from beyond the mountains within the timber belt, and their rich fur clothing and bountiful supply of deer skins told plainly that they had wintered where game was abundant. Too-rook was the most civilized of any Eskimo we had yet seen, and because of the little one they were invited to sleep in our cabin. The children were happy as they rolled on the floor or chatted to the baby, and we termed them the "Happy Family." They were on their way to Herschel Island to trade with the whaling ship, and secure provisions for the season. Among the pack of dogs that this chief possessed was a splendid female Husky and two half-grown pups. The female, which was called To-hoo-la, being a powerful beast, was added to our team by the flattering offer of a tin pail and a small kettle. But the Too-rook family had no sooner gone than trouble broke out among our own dogs. Our wheel dog "Coffee" (so named because of his color) a large Saint Bernard who had always ruled the whole pack, found he had a jealous rival in our leader, Ah-ni-ghi-ta. Things no longer went right.

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

There was a continual bickering and jangling, and always the trouble was between these, our two best beasts. Matters grew worse instead of better, and we plainly saw it would be a fight to death, and with great apprehension we watched this rivalry. Coffee was chained up during the day, but the nights were freezing cold, and he was allowed his freedom. On more than one night the sounds of quarreling and strife among the other dogs would turn us out of our warm sleeping robes, fearful that the two dogs were at it again. At other times a dead silence would occur, and we knew the two rivals had sneaked away to meet each other for a final finish. Rushing out we would find the fight waxing hot, while the whole pack, in a wolfish circle, stood ready to finish off which ever dog went down first. So we tried putting them at work; we hauled logs for firewood, made long trips to our traps, and did all manner of work that is done with horses in a warm climate. But this was all to no purpose, they would fight, and we knew that nothing short of death of one or the other would put an end to the trouble. But the opportunity did not present itself until after we had returned to the island on our way to the mountains. Here was a pack of eighty strong, mostly Huskys, and at night the wolf-like song could be heard with its long-drawn wailing and half sob, dismal as a funeral dirge, and as the morning light chased away the gloom, Ah-ni-ghi-ta had passed out of existence. The dark circle had closed in and peace was again restored.

## CARIBOU

When the missionary from Canada first visited Herschel Island he found the Eskimo race fast diminishing because of the habitual practice of putting to death all the girl babies born among them. The life of hardship and toil that falls to the lot of woman-kind in Eskimo land, together with the low plane of esteem on which she is placed by her husband or chief, causes the lowly mother to shrink and feel the disgrace of a female being born to them. And often by her own hand the spark of life was allowed to go out as soon as the sex was discovered. But if the mother-love allowed the infant to live, the slightest provocation was enough to cause its death at the hand of the father. Shocked by this state of affairs, the missionary determined to put a stop to this infantile slaughter, especially on the island where the missionary was located. So calling the natives together he explained the disastrous effect upon the race, and ended by telling them of the wickedness and cruelty of such a practice, and the importance of embracing the white man's religion, which allowed of no such doings. But as this had no apparent effect upon them, the missionary decided that the only thing to do was to adopt a law, the violation of which was met with punishment. Consequently a whipping post was erected, the nature of which was explained to the natives. They laughed, but the practice ceased for a time, except among the tribes located at some distance away. After a while an incident occurred that brought the matter to an abrupt issue. A young native returning from a whaling expedition had, on leaving the

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

ship, secreted a flask of rum beneath his artiga and carried it to his igloo. Here he began drinking, until in wild frenzy he caught up his two-year-old girl and, swinging her above his head for a moment, madly dashed her brains out upon the rocks. The news spread rapidly, and the missionary determined to punish the culprit. After consulting with the captain of the ship, four stalwart sailors were sent to bring the man to the mission. He was stripped and tied to the post and given fifty lashes, the missionary administering the first ten strokes. This action on the part of the missionary caused great consternation among the tribes, who fled from the island in great anger, and serious fears were entertained for a time regarding his personal safety. But as there were about twenty white men on the island at the time, no outbreak occurred, and the incident passed without further trouble. A high regard for the law of the island was inaugurated among the tribes along the coast, who soon saw that it was only for their good, and with many kind acts of the missionary they were soon persuaded to again take up their abode on the island, and now it is a rare occurrence that death among the girl babies is heard of.

We now began to make short trips to the foothills, examining all the rivulets and creek beds for signs of gold. Many of these were frozen solid, and much labor was required before reaching bed rock. While our chart described but one small stream lying in the valley beyond the divide, still we were anxious to be at work, and it was too early to break up camp



## CARIBOU

on account of the deep snow and severe weather. A few colors were discovered, but the pan failed to reveal pay rock.

Returning one evening to Marmot Hill we found the whole village in an uproar. Too-rook had returned from the whaling vessel where they had spent two weeks, but such a change; his skins were gone, his outfit completely dilapidated, and only a small stock of provisions to show for it. The wild, haggard look and the unsteady gait plainly told the story of the white man's rum effect upon the unsuspecting Eskimo. But the most pitiful object was the baby girl; all night it lay and moaned, its little life nearly crushed out, caused by the hand of its own father while in a drunken frenzy at the island, and fearing punishment from the hands of the white men, had fled without stopping to secure full value of the skins they had left on board ship. On the following morning they left us for their village beyond the mountains; Koleh-na clinging to her helpless child was bundled up on the sled, Too-rook taking the lead, and the two boys following behind. But such a change. A few days later, while prospecting near the head waters of the Babbage River, we found the body of the little one, wrapped in furs and hanging to the branches of a clump of alders growing near the gulch. With pick and shovel we dug a small grave, and after placing the little form therein covered it with rocks, thus preventing the wolves from ever disturbing the resting place of this little innocent child of the Northland.



## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

One day as the sun was shining brightly, casting a glimmer over ice and snow, an Arctic fox suddenly dropped down into the passageway cut through the snow leading from the door of the cabin to the foot of the bluff, and seeing the cabin door ajar slipped inside and hid under one of the bunks. The cook, who had just finished the morning housework, quickly closed the door and made the visitor a prisoner. All hands were called in, a dog chain and collar procured, and we proceeded to collar the white beauty. But her ladyship had no notion of being taken so easily. Around the room she fairly flew, upsetting kettles and pans in her endeavor to find an opening, and then with a sullen glare in her wicked eyes settled down in a dark corner, showing her teeth and awaiting further action. The cook, thinking to outwit her, reached over and undertook to place a slip noose over her head, when suddenly, and without warning, she sprang several feet into the air, and catching his nose between her sharp teeth split it to the bone. The medicine chest was quickly brought into requisite use, and the nose cleansed and bandaged. We then placed a box in the corner and the fox was driven into it, but with much snarling and biting, we finally succeeded in placing the collar about her neck, and chained her to a crowbar which we made fast in the corner of the room. She refused to eat or drink, but continued to snap and bite at everything she could reach until her teeth were broken and bleeding, and we decided to send her to the missionary at the island, who owned a tame blue fox

## CARIBOU

which was a male. But it was to no good purpose, for the confinement must have set her crazy; after lacerating the blue fox in a horrible manner, she went into spasms and died. The blue fox did not recover from the effect of the bite, and died a few days after. With considerable apprehension we watched the nose of the cook, but he entirely recovered except for a scar which he carries to this day—a remembrance of the days when he lassoed foxes in the Northland.

## IX

### Return to Herschel Island

MISSION WORK—THE CAPTAIN'S REQUEST—JACK'S  
DISAPPOINTMENT—WOLVES—A HALT IN THE  
NIGHT.

THE contrast between summer and winter is nowhere more striking than in the Arctic Coast. In summer the midnights are without darkness, in which the sun stands visible in the heavens like a victorious king, throned on a dias of purple and gold. Such is the impressive sight of the majestic orb holding imperial revel at midnight amid scenes of unearthly radiance; but how different the winter with its howling tempest and its two months of weird gloom in which the orb of day is never seen, in which the absolute blackness of perpetual night is relieved only by the shimmering whiteness of the snow and the picturesque brightness of the Northern lights.

The weather was now beginning to moderate, and as April drew near we decided to convey all our belongings to the island, where we would leave them in charge of the missionary and proceed on our journey to the coveted gold fields. Arriving at the island we

## RETURN TO HERSCHEL ISLAND

found the missionary hard at work teaching and preaching to a school of about fifty dusky pupils, although some of them were fathers and mothers. The mission work at Herschel Island and Point Barrow progress but slowly. Having no written language of their own, the Eskimo has to be taught the English language before the principles of the Christian religion can be thoroughly understood. Every Sunday morning religious services were held at the mission, accompanied with singing, in which all heartily joined, although hardly a word could be understood by us. There was one song, however, that the children loved to sing more than any other—which the good missionary had taught them to sing in their own jargon. It was the old familiar song of our childhood days:

Jesus loves me this I know,  
For the Bible tells me so,  
Little ones to Him belong,  
We are weak but he is strong.  
Yes, Jesus loves me, etc., etc.

Eskimo jargon:

Je-rok cam-i-ug gi nee,  
Kill-e uh ac poom, ko-zi-nee,  
Gee-u-ac nic-a kil-u-gok,  
Je-rok bombic kil-u ac.  
Cam-i-ug nee etc., etc.

This was always sung with great enthusiasm, much to the enjoyment of all present.

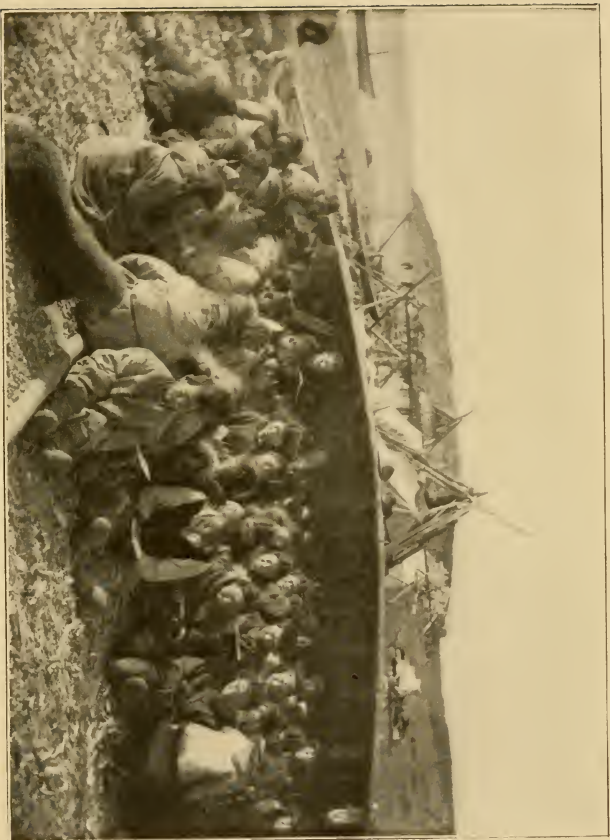
The weather continued mild, and being anxious

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

to get our goods safely housed before starting up stream, we secured the services of several dog teams, and returning to the cabin at Marmot Hill transported all of our belongings to the island. It was at this time that the leader of our dog team, Ah-ni-ghi-to, met his untimely death.

Captain Hagerty of the steam whaling vessel *Mary D. Hume* came to us one day, and after giving us an invitation to dine at the ship that evening said that he had a request to make before we left the island. That night, after partaking of a bountiful repast, the captain told us the following story:

When the gold fever broke out the previous year, the sailors who manned the *Hume* became uneasy and restless. The many flattering reports from the gold fields, compared with the small lay offered them by the whaling company, caused a feeling of dissatisfaction among the forecastle hands in particular, as they were to receive but a two-hundredth part (or lay) of the whalebone secured, and the catch thus far had not been unusually flattering. Matters kept growing worse, until the captain plainly saw that something must be done or mutiny would soon break out among the men. So calling them all on deck one morning he explained to them the folly of leaving the ship, that they had no mining tools or proper outfit, and if they had, the reports were not reliable, and would no doubt end in failure to themselves and loss to the ship. Besides they had signed for three years, and they would be treated as deserters, and if caught they would be



*"Every Sunday morning religious services were held,  
accompanied with singing."*





## RETURN TO HERSCHEL ISLAND

put in irons and taken to San Francisco, where punishment for desertion would surely follow. For a few days the excitement quieted down, and the captain flattered himself that the trouble had passed. But a few weeks later, on returning from a hunting trip up the river, he was met by the first mate, who informed him that four of the sailors had stolen provisions and a few tools from the ship unobserved, and were just on the point of leaving the island when the alarm was given. The remaining officers, after procuring several of the ship's rifles, started in pursuit. Several miles up the river they came up to the fugitives, who answered their demand to halt by a fusilade of bullets. The engineer was mortally wounded, and died before reaching the ship. The other officers immediately opened fire, killing two of the deserters on the spot. The other two succeeded in getting away by dropping all but their rifles and running for their lives. The captain immediately ordered his men to go with dogs and sled and bring the three bodies to the ship, where, after suitable services had been solemnized by the missionary, they were buried on the island near the mission. This sorrowful incident had restored peace and quiet to the rest of the crew, but the time was now approaching when the ship must leave on her trip to the whaling grounds, and from there to San Francisco, which would be impossible unless the vacancy caused by the loss of the five men could be filled before leaving the winter quarters. The captain then requested that our party return to the island

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

in July, when the ice would break, and accompany him on the whaling expedition to the eastward, and offered us free transportation to San Francisco, adding that in case we should fail to strike it rich we would be allowed the lay due the deserters. As this offer would secure our safe arrival back to civilization, with whatever we might have to transfer, we accepted his generous offer and returned to the mission.

Many of the natives were leaving the island now to engage in hunting the caribou that were gradually moving toward the coast from the timber belt beyond the watershed. Word had already been received that the game was in the coast mountains, and many were being killed by the men camping further up the river. Several days were spent in trading with the remaining natives, in which we disposed of all our dogs but four of the best, and added greatly to our stock of furs. Then placing all in one of the whaling company's outhouses, that the captain kindly offered us, we prepared our outfit ready to start on the following day. As the sun began to cast its rays over the mountain peaks on this bright but crisp April morning, our little party of four men, with four powerful dogs hitched to an Eskimo sledge, could be seen many miles up the Herschel River. We were well equipped with mining tools of all descriptions, rifles and ammunition, and provisions sufficient for three months. Munichchuk, our guide, with his wife and child, accompanied us with two Husky dogs that drew the food for the teams. This consisted of whaleblubber cut in small chunks,

## RETURN TO HERSCHEL ISLAND

which is the principal food for dogs in the Northland. Although the sun shone warm during the middle of the day, the nights were freezing cold, and our heavy fur bedding served us well as we lay in our small canvas tent at night. The snow lay heavy over the whole land, and the freezing nights produced such a crust that to travel over land was out of the question. The ice, however, was quite smooth, and by keeping to the river bed we made fair progress except for the winding of the stream. The third day out we met a single native returning from the island with a sledload of caribou saddles. The other parties now left us, urged on by the flattering reports of their fellows, and for several days we traveled slowly up the trail they had left. Many deer signs were now seen on every side, and twice we had the good fortune to get a chance shot that replenished our larder with venison steak for several days.

Several times, while urging our way up the ice-bound stream, a herd of mountain sheep would present themselves high up the side of the mountain, and after watching us for a moment from some narrow jutting would quickly vanish behind some jagged rocks, only to return to view many yards further up the mountain. Our guns were immediately brought into requisite use, but the distance was too great and the little puffs of dust far below witnessed to our vain attempt to reach the wary game.

We had now crossed the boundary line and were in Northern Alaska. On arriving at the foot of the

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

mountains we observed a deep valley leading up between the mountains, through which another stream lay hidden by the deep snow. Here we found many of the natives camping, and carcasses of caribou hanging from poles and low branches of trees told plainly that we had reached the hunting ground. Consequently we decided to camp for a few days; so pitching our tent and depositing all our belongings inside we settled down for a few days' hunt.

An abundance of timber was found in this valley and also for some distance up the side of the mountain. Game abounded on every side. Caribou could be seen any day crossing the valley and moving northward, while signs of bear and wolves were found on every hand. The gulches and timber belts were teeming with grouse, while marmot and the much-prized ermine were numerous along the creek banks. This was indeed "The Hunter's Paradise."

Early the next morning, having observed a herd of caribou descending the rocky side of the mountain, the engineer and Jack decided to try their hand at securing fresh steak for dinner. Taking a rifle and an ax they started up the mountain side toward the moving herd, and finally secreted themselves behind some rocks and awaited their oncoming. As the leaders drew near the engineer raised his gun and fired, and one deer fell in its tracks, but as he attempted to throw in a second cartridge the rifle crammed and they were obliged to be content with a single shot. As they approached the fallen caribou it sprang to its feet, and

*"With the passing of the caribou came the timber wolves."*





## RETURN TO HERSCHEL ISLAND

plunging down the mountain side for a few yards fell again. But as the camp was located at the foot of the mountain, they continued to urge their game along, expecting to finally dispatch it with the ax. After falling several times the wounded animal began to recover its strength and started off at a rapid pace and was soon out of sight in the thick timber. The tracks soon became so intermingled with those of the passing herd that further progress was impossible, and the men returned to the camp much chagrined at the unnecessary loss.

We remained for several days in this locality, hunting and trapping, the result of which enabled us to add several fine specimens of Arctic fox skins to our stock, which we sent to the island by the returning natives. As has always been the case where large game abound, wolves are sure to be found prowling about, so this was not an exception. With the passing of the caribou came the timber wolves, following on the outskirts of the great herd, living off from the weak and wounded and making the nights hideous with their united howlings. These wolves are habitual thieves, while many deer heads and other refuse lay scattered about, still they would spend hours in trying to pull down a deer saddle hanging to the branch of a tree, or digging them out of the snow where the natives had buried them for safekeeping. Our dogs were in constant danger and kept inside of the tent every night. However, some of the Eskimos being less thoughtful regarding the welfare of the faithful animals, awoke



## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

to find them dead or mortally wounded by the sharp fangs of the murderous wolves.

It was now the first day of May, and as the weather continued fine we broke up camp, and directing our course to the eastward followed up the stream that wound through the valley between the mountains, stopping now and then to examine the rockbed, or to pan out a few shovels of dirt from the gulches leading up from the base of the mountains. The sun continued warm through the day, causing the snow to soften, thereby impeding our progress, so we decided to camp and only travel during the early part of the day, while the snow remained frozen. By starting at two o'clock in the morning we found the traveling much improved, and the crisp morning air urged us forward at a much more rapid pace.

Arriving early one morning at a turn in the valley, we beheld the whole side of the mountain covered with dark objects that appeared to be moving down toward the valley in which we were traveling. Munichchuk, who was some distance in advance of the train, came running back much excited, and informed us that it was an immense herd of caribou crossing the mountains on their way to the coast, and explained to us the danger of being trampled to death if caught in their path. The dogs also became unmanageable, and it was only by severe punishment that we were able to hold them in place. But we knew it would mean certain death to allow the dogs to rush out toward this innumerable herd. Drawing our sledges close up

## RETURN TO HERSCHEL ISLAND

under the rocky ledge we chained the dogs to the load. Then taking our rifles we approached the bend, and climbing to the top of the low bluff watched the moving mass. On they came, never swerving to the right or left—slowly but with steady tread—thousands of living, moving animals. Sometimes crowding each other or spreading out to avoid a jutting rock, but fearing nothing in their innumerable strength. Several times a straggler would venture within a few feet of where we were standing, when they would turn, stamp their feet, and then dash on to join the onward march. For more than an hour we halted and watched the countless number pass. It was nearly daylight as we drew out our sleds again into the trail and continued our journey up the valley. The snow still lay heavy in the lowlands, but on some of the southern slopes bare spots of rock could be seen, and in the creekbeds water was beginning to settle, much to the discomfort of all of us.

On arrival at a place where a deep gulch led up toward the south we entered the rocky canyon, and after several hours of hard pulling and tugging reached the top of the first range of mountains, and pitching our tent on its level summit indulged in a much-needed rest. This plateau on which we had halted was bare of earth, being solid rock on which no form of vegetation existed. Not a stick of wood could be found with which to make a fire, so we had to content ourselves with the remains of our last meal to appease our ravenous appetites. Our object in climbing to this high

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

elevation was not merely to shorten the distance, but to enable us to locate our position and take observations of the surrounding country. As we surveyed the vast expanse over which we had traveled, we could see the great ocean, a vast waste of interminable whiteness away to the north, while to the southward, rearing its gigantic peak to the very clouds, could be seen the great spur of the Old Crow Mountains, toward which our course was directed. It was at the foot of this spur that the trail described in our chart was to begin, and if the description was true, then at the end of the trail we should find that for which we had forfeited all the blessings of civilization, had braved the dangers by both land and sea, had suffered hardships and privations almost unendurable. As we went back in our minds over the perils of the past eight months, a sudden fear seemed to take possession of us, and again we asked ourselves the question, "Would we succeed?" Pressing onward we followed the range of mountains, until the abrupt ending of the level summit compelled us to descend. Several days of hard traveling now lay before us before we could reach a point where we might begin definite work.

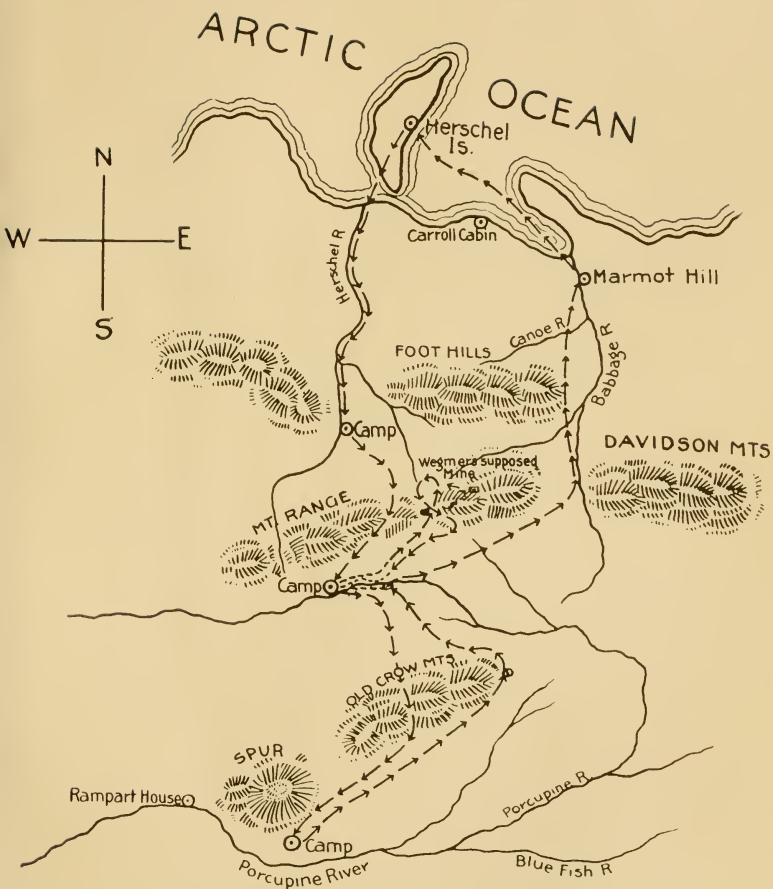
Again in the valley we kept our course by the compass, as near as possible, toward the mountain spur. The snow was deep and heavy, but the wood was plenty in the gulches, and we had an abundance of provisions, which was replenished each day by a fresh supply of grouse, which frequented the valley in great numbers.

## RETURN TO HERSCHEL ISLAND

Several times in our journeyings we would come across an Indian settlement (mostly Loucheaux's) who were much interested in our story and gave us much useful information concerning the route to the Old Crow, but they discredited the fact that any miner had been in the mountains and found gold in any quantity, and especially ridiculed the idea of a cabin being built in the timber a year ago without their knowledge. Such a thing they considered impossible. Many miners have been up in the mountains to prospect, but all had returned, and if we expected to find gold we should make our way toward Dawson. This was the advice that awaited us wherever we met with the inhabitants of this mountain country. And while we felt that they were sincere—and many of them having mingled with the whites could explain to us in very good English, and appeared much interested in our welfare—still we felt that we had sacrificed too much not to give the matter a thorough investigation. However, at this point two of the party became much discouraged, and on hearing the flattering reports of the rich gold finds in the Klondike districts, urged us to give up our plans and go with the crowd. But we were firm, and told them that the only way to succeed was to stay together, and reminded them of the fact that the chart was given by the hand of a dying man, but if they still desired to go we should continue to search at least until we proved the chart to be wrong. After considerable discussion unity again was restored, and we proceeded without further trouble.

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

On the 18th of May we reached the wide valley with plenty of timber on every side, and decided to make this a permanent camping place, being located about three days' journey north from the Old Crow Mountains, and do our exploring single-handed, returning to the camp whenever necessity required.



The trail as described by the Wegmer Chart.





## X

# The Trail

WE REACH THE OLD CROW—A HARD CLIMB—  
DEATH OF TOHOOLA—DISCOURAGEMENT.

HAVING established our camp we proceeded to arrange for a trip to the Old Crow, there to take up the trail as described by our chart.

The water had now settled in the valley until the little stream had widened and deepened, and was now rushing and foaming over the icebed from one bank to the other. Leaving Munichchuk to care for the camp and hunt, we each prepared a pack composed of a pair of blankets and provisions sufficient for several days, and then climbing up the rocky range directed our course toward the Old Crow Mountains. Our progress was slow because of the deep, soft snow in the valleys, and the loose shellrock on the mountain side, but on the evening of the second day we reached the Porcupine River which flows along the foot of the Old Crow Mountains, and discovered at once the junction where the trail was to begin. Climbing to the top of a high bluff we scanned the surrounding country with our glass. Down stream to the westward

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

could be seen the Old Rampart House, past which the river was now rushing, while great cakes of ice could be seen grinding and crowding each other as the voluminous quantities of surface water drove them along. As our eyes followed the course of the stream we could see the bend beyond the Rampart House, where the stream continued its mad rush toward Circle City to join the waters of the Klondike. At the foot of the Old Crow a small stream entered the river from the northeast, and it was at this junction that the trail was to begin. Selecting a dry, sheltered nook near this little stream, surrounded with small scrub pines and spruce, we pitched our tent, and after partaking of a light supper from our packs rolled up in our warm blankets and were soon fast asleep. We will here give our readers a little peep into the secret chart that we had so jealously guarded, and which had led us to leave our loved ones and all that was dear to us, and plunge into this wild, uncivilized Northland, three thousand miles from civilization, and here, after a year spent in traversing this almost impenetrable country, had just reached the place where the chart told us was the beginning of the end. Here at the junction of the Old Crow and the Porcupine Rivers, at the foot of the Old Crow Mountains, we take up the trail. (See map, page 96.) At four o'clock the next morning we were astir, and after consulting our chart and carefully taking observations, packed up our outfit and started up the trail. For twelve hours we picked our way along the foot of the mountain range, where the

## THE TRAIL

timber was thick and heavy, and traveling slow and tiresome, and at five o'clock camped near the end of the range.

After satisfying our appetites a huge fire was built outside the tent, and with blankets thrown over our shoulders sat down and conversed over the prospect before us. The sun shone until nearly midnight, and it was not until it had sunk below the horizon that we turned in for the night. The woods were ringing with the songs of many birds, and the sun high up, as we first opened our eyes the next morning, our limbs stiff from the long tramp and the heavy packs, but we soon threw off the lethargy and again started on our way. The trail now led through a long, wide valley, and the traveling was much improved. Toward night we reached a stream of water which was almost overflowing its banks and was impossible to ford. To the east lay a deep canyon where a heavy growth of underbrush formed a regular jungle. We knew that thus far we had followed the direction of our instructor, for the chart had described this place as a deep jungle. Finding ourselves nearly opposite the camp where we had left Munichchuk in charge we set up our guidon, and turning to the westward continued along the river up the valley, and an hour from the time we left the trail came in sight of the big tent. Munichchuk was away with the dogs to bring in the carcass of a deer which he had just killed, and the several dozen grouse that we observed hanging from the branches of trees told plainly that he had not been idle. Sooky, the

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

wife of the guide, was busy making boots for our party, and had already finished several pairs. Silok, the daughter, a girl of ten or twelve years, was also engaged in stripping tendons to be used in sewing, which is the only kind of thread used by the natives. These boots are made of seal skin, with bottoms from the skin of the grampus or white whale. These soles, which the women shape by chewing and pressing, are turned up all around the edge and sewed with tendons taken from the caribou and mountain sheep. These boots are waterproof and very comfortable to wear. Many of the Eskimo women are experts at bootmaking, and it is no uncommon thing to see their teeth worn nearly to the gums from the constant practice of chewing the soles into shape.

It was now June. The snow had disappeared except in the valleys; the streams were swollen and every creekbed had become a rushing river. Unable to cross the river, we decided to build a raft and float down the stream until we reached the trail. Consequently we began the same day to cut down dry trees, and by night had lashed together a very seaworthy craft. Early the next day found us floating down stream with a fresh supply of provisions, and at ten o'clock had reached the trail without accident. Securing our guidon and blankets, we poled our raft across the stream and made it fast to a small tree that stood near the water's edge. We now divided our outfit into four packages, and each shouldering his load continued our tramp northward. Our course now lay to the

## THE TRAIL

north, northeast, and for some distance the footing was good and we made fine progress. But as the afternoon wore away the trail led up the side of the mountain, and finally came to a perpendicular wall of rock which we were unable to surmount. Dropping our heavy loads, we decided to camp for the night and wait until the next day before trying to again pick up the trail which had come to such an abrupt ending. Leaving two of our party to prepare breakfast, the next morning found Jack and myself out early for some signs to direct our future course. It was decided that we each start out in opposite directions and follow along the foot of the bluffs until the trail was found. I had proceeded a short distance to the westward when a shout from Jack brought me quickly back; he stood near the foot of the bluff pointing to a small scrub pine growing out from between the crevices of rocks about one hundred feet up the mountain. A blaze could plainly be seen reaching from the ground to the lower limbs of this tree. But how to reach that point with our loads was a question which must be answered later. A short distance to the eastward the bluffs seemed to be more accessible, and toward this we made our way. Rounding a clump of bushes and fallen timber, we came upon an old trail leading us directly toward the blazed pine. On arriving at this point we found that the trail led still further up the mountain, but the footing appeared more smooth and quite easy to pass over. Returning to camp we found the other two men anxiously waiting.

## THE FROZEN NORTHLAND

The situation was explained, and after doing justice to a well-earned breakfast of sandwiches and coffee, we broke camp and again proceeded on our journey. Our course now lay directly over the summit of the mountain and then turned eastward and continued around the mountain-side, and for two days we followed this course, but on the evening of the second day again entered a wide valley where all signs of the trail ceased.

Several small streams trickled down from the mountain-side, forming a small creek which wound its way eastward through the valley. A few small spruce trees grew along the foot of the bluffs, but no signs of the presence of white men could be found, much less of a mining camp. The Wegmer mines must be in this locality was the opinion of all; the chart told of shallow streams, where gold could be seen embedded in the rocky creekbed. It also told of a cabin built within a clump of small pine trees, and a gold mine where a shaft had been sunk and nuggets large and small easy to obtain. Vain delusion! In a time of excitement like the gold craze of 1898-9, a fairy tale immediately became a certainty in the mind of adventurous men, and heedless of all good advice of friends or loved ones they plunge into the abyss, which can only end in failure and disappointment.

We crossed to the opposite foot hills, but all signs of the trail had ceased, and only a few streams could be seen and no indication of gold. The Arctic Ocean could again be seen from this place, for we had now

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reached the Davidson Mountains. Several days were spent in prospecting, but not a color could we discover in any of the creekbeds. Again we examined our chart, going over each portion with strict attention. Surely we had followed its directions in every particular, but here all had ended. The chart had described the valley as containing a thick growth of timber, a small cabin, and gold nuggets plainly observed in the creekbed. While to the contrary, only a few small scrubby trees existed, no sign of a cabin, and not a color to reward our most diligent search. The course of the streams flowed eastward, and we conjectured that they must connect with the Babbage River further down. Our party now separated, two going each way in hopes of finding some trace of the Wegmer mines. Much time was even spent in sinking a shaft near the foot of a high bluff that appeared to be a favorable sight for prospecting, but all to no purpose. For weeks we traversed those mountains from Herschel River on the west, to the Babbage River in the east, but not an ounce of gold or a trace of any mining camp could we discover. Weary and heart-sore we returned to the valley and prepared to retrace our steps. We had been deceived. Our chart, that we had guarded with jealous care by day and dreamed of by night, was simply a "will-o'-the-wisp" delusion which we had followed, and at such a sacrifice. Again we consulted together, as we had done many times before, but this time the decision must be final. Why a man should guard his secret unto death, and give out



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a false trail at such a time for honest men to follow, was hard to understand, but something seemed to tell me that the time would come when we would know. While thus troubled and perplexed, I turned to the little Bible that I always carried. How often had I received comfort from that little book when sad and lonely, or hardships and trials seemed more than I could bear, and now as I confronted the greatest disappointment of my life, I felt that no earthly help was sufficient to bear me up, and turning to its pages I read: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes. The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. I will go before thee and make the rugged places plain, and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden treasures of secret places, that thou mayest know that I am the Lord which call thee by name. Even the Lord of Israel."

Our provisions were now nearly gone, and turning our faces southward, we started on our back trail. We were tired, sore, and discouraged, but without the heavy luggage we made quick time, and on Saturday morning, June 25th, arrived at the river, where we found our raft high and dry, but still fastened to the tree which was now several yards from the water's edge. The rushing river a few days before was now a small stream, rippling along the center of an otherwise dry creekbed. As we forded this small brooklet, we could but compare our feelings with the high hopes that

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were throbbing in our breasts as we navigated this same stream only a few short weeks before.

The snow had at this time disappeared, and the trees put forth a shade of green from the opening buds, while here and there a snow-white flower could be seen peeping out from their mossy beds. Arctic grouse were abundant in the valleys, and signs of moose and caribou were all about us. We would camp for a while at least and enjoy the surroundings before returning to Herschel Island, was the opinion expressed by all as we sauntered back up the valley toward the camp where we had left the native guide and his family.

Arriving at camp, we found Munichchuk much excited over the depredations of the previous night. A bear had entered the camp and carried off the saddles of a deer and killed one of the dogs. Munichchuk had been away at the time to hunt deer, which he found much easier to approach at night, although nearly as light as day. The woman and girl having no weapon of defense, deserted the tent, and running up to the top of the high bluff, left Bruin to his own sport. The tent had been pulled down and much mischief done. There are several species of bear that inhabit the Northern country, but this one kind was feared more by the natives than all others. It was known as the white-nosed bear. They are not large but are very ferocious, with great tenacity of life, often carrying away enough lead to kill several ordinary bears, and will fight a man until shot through the

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brain. We therefore decided to remain in camp a few days and watch for his return. Nothing unusual occurred during that night, but early the next morning Munichchuk came running in and informed us that he had discovered two bears up on the side of the mountain slowly coming toward the camp. Securely fastening the tent, we sent the wife and daughter away in an opposite direction, and taking our repeating rifles, we quickly followed Munichchuk. We soon discovered the two bears moving slowly down a recent snowslide, and secreting ourselves behind a large boulder, awaited their approach. We now had the pleasure of witnessing the natural cunning of our native guide. Telling us to lay quiet, he now crept along to where a large boulder had been displaced, leaving a deep hole, and quickly slipping into it, disappeared from sight. Soon one of the bears came down within gunshot, and as he turned broadside Munichchuk's rifle rang out, and the bear went rolling down the hill, but soon regained his feet and, rearing into the air, glared savagely about endeavoring to locate his enemy. But the native knew his ground, and immediately after firing he dropped down into his hiding place. The bear now began gathering moss and crowding it into the wound made by the 44 Marlin. Immediately another shot was heard, and again the bear raged about in quest of the offender that was firing death into his very vitals. But the last shot was dangerously near the heart, and Bruin began to feel sick, and soon lay down, when with more accuracy a ball was sent crashing through his brain. The other

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bear, either frightened by the noise, or seeing the battle going on against his companion, must have run away, for we saw no more of him, and was not disturbed by them again. The bear the guide had killed was indeed a white-nosed one, and weighed about two hundred pounds. The skin was in fine condition, and was added to our collection. Our dogs, having been idle for several weeks, were now growing fat and suffered much from the heat during the day. Plenty of fresh meat was at hand, and for a week we did nothing but rest, giving up entirely to our feelings of disappointment and discouragement. But as time passed hope began to revive, and we began to arrange for our return to the whaling vessel, that we might be in time to comply with the captain's request. Much work was to be done preparatory to making the return trip. Sooky and the girl were set to making saddles for the dogs, to aid in packing our outfit overland to the island. The ship would leave for the whaling grounds about the 10th of July, and it was now late in June, and more than one hundred miles lay between us and the ocean.

Leaving our sleds and mining equipments to the care of mother earth, we placed our blankets and ammunition in the dog saddles, and each man, woman, and child, with a pack of provisions sufficient for themselves, started on the long tramp to the ocean. As we reached the valley where the trail had ended, and looking about us, a feeling of indignation and resentment came over us, and some hard expressions escaped the

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lips of more than one of the party. But as the man who was responsible for our sufferings was beyond human reach, we stifled our feelings of revenge and pressed onward. We each resolved that should we reach home in safety we would spare no pains or money in finding out the secret that had so cruelly escaped us. And something seemed to say, "Sometime you shall know." The weather was now exceedingly warm, and our progress slow and tiresome. The dogs suffered much from the excessive heat. The sun shone both night and day, and would not sink below the horizon again until August. The nights were much cooler than the days, and we decided to sleep during the day and travel more at night. The third day out, while we were asleep, a great commotion among the dogs suddenly awakened us, and on running out discovered that our female dog, "Tohoola," had become raving mad and was biting at everything she came near. The other dogs seemed to know the danger and were running in every direction to keep out of her way, yelping and growling whenever she came near them. Securing a rope we soon succeeded in throwing it over her head, and after placing a collar about her neck, chained her to a large clump of alders that grew near the tent. She continued to bite, and soon had the alders gnawed in two and was loose again. Fearing for the safety of the other dogs, we were obliged to put an end to her life. We had by this time become much attached to our dogs, and the death of Tohoola was much regretted by the whole party, for she was one

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of the best in the team. We now had but three dogs left, including the one owned by Munichchuk, and he was already packing fifty pounds weight. Our spaniel dog, Sport, being too small to carry much of a load, was given in the charge of the girl, Silook. Old "Coffee," the largest dog of the pack, had now twenty-five pounds of cartridges added to his load. The rest of the luggage that poor Tohoola had so bravely carried for three days was divided among the men of the party, and we again proceeded on our way. Although the deep moss in the valley and the rough rocky ranges made the traveling very difficult, we covered a distance of fifteen miles daily.

We had now reached the head waters of the Babage River, and following near the riverbed, found the traveling much improved. Several flocks of wild ducks came heading up the stream, and our ever-ready rifles served us well in supplying our larder with fresh fowl. Other game became scarce after leaving the mountains, and only a few marmots and ptarmigan came within reach of our fire.

We finally reached Canoe River, which flows eastward and empties into the Baggage River about twenty miles south of the coast. This river is swift, but being rather shallow in places, we decided to ford it, if possible, at this place; otherwise we might be obliged to travel some distance up stream before finding shallow water. The guide immediately removed the saddle from his dog, and stripping off his outer garments started to cross the stream, holding the saddle and con-



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tents on his shoulders. His dog followed and swam across in safety. The rest of the party sat down on the shore to watch the procedure. While thus engaged old Coffee had walked down to the water's edge unobserved, still carrying his pack, and before we realized his danger plunged into the water, with the intention no doubt of following the other dog. But his great load bore him down, and the next moment he sank out of sight. We all sprang to our feet and rushed into the water, but the swift current must have carried him down very quickly, for although we watched faithfully along the river bank for several hours, thinking he might be washed ashore, we were obliged to give it up and leave him to a watery grave. Noble old Coffee, faithful to the last, ready to brave any danger to serve his masters. Tears filled our eyes as we proceeded on our journey without our faithful friend.

We had anticipated meeting with natives who came up the river every spring to fish for salmon, and thereby secure a boat to carry us down to the cabin where we had left our scow safely moored. But as no such opportunity presented itself, we were obliged to travel the whole distance.

Reaching Marmot Hill about midnight, we set to work constructing a raft from the driftwood strewn along the bank. Our cabin being on the opposite side of the river, we placed all of our luggage upon the raft and two of the men poled it across. They then returned in safety and ferried the whole party over



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to where our cabin was located. We found the place deserted, and no signs of any one having occupied the premises since winter. The roof of the cabin had fallen in, the door hung on one hinge, the chinking had fallen out from between the logs, and the whole surroundings appeared forsaken and desolate, strangely contrasting with the thriving Eskimo village we left only four months before. The cabin was damp and unfit to be occupied, so building a fire outside, we pitched our small tent, cooked our remaining provisions, and after partaking of a light lunch, laid down for a good rest, of which we were greatly in need. We must have slept for a long time, when we were suddenly startled by a loud burst of thunder, followed by sharp flashes of lightning that seemed to fairly shake the earth. The storm broke upon us with all its fury; the rain fell in torrents, accompanied with hail stones that threatened our frail tent with destruction. The water poured in on us from all sides, wetting our blankets and threatening to sweep us from our moorings. Suddenly a strong gust of wind sent the tent flying several yards away and left us entirely unprotected. Looking about us for some place of shelter, we discovered our old scow turned bottom side up on the bank of the river, just as we had left it in the fall. With a shout we all ran to it, and lifting the side found it afforded a very comfortable shelter. The seams were somewhat leaky, but soon tightened up as the rain continued to fall. We were wet to the skin, but the atmosphere was warm, and soon a feeling

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of drowsiness came over us, and in spite of our uncomfortable condition were soon asleep.

The sun was shining hot when we awoke the next day. It was nearly noon, and the air was hot and suffocating under the old boat. As we crept out from our hiding place and looked about, everything seemed to have changed. The earth was covered with a carpet of green, with beautiful flowers growing here and there, while the moss-covered rocks and hills had apparently put on a new dress. We felt rested and refreshed from our long sleep, and the change was no doubt in us more than in our surroundings. After spreading our blankets and wet clothing out to dry in the sun, we immediately began the task of calking the seams of the old scow, preparatory to making a trip to Herschel Island.

The next day a boat load of Eskimo came up the river, among whom was "Oneac," a brother of our guide. They were very glad to assist us, and with their help we soon succeeded in launching the scow. All of our belongings we then deposited in the bottom of the old boat, and taking on the whole party rowed down to the mouth of the river, where a native settlement was located.

The ice in the ocean was just breaking up, and the booming and grinding of the ice floes reminded us of our first experience when entering its waters a year before. Several days were spent in the settlement, waiting for the ice to move northward and the rough waters to calm down. The natives were all engaged

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in catching fish and drying them in the sun for future use. Our provisions being exhausted, we were obliged to depend entirely upon our dusky friends for food. While they were very kind and hospitable to us, their chief diet was fish, and as they used no salt or any kind of seasoning the food soon became very distasteful to us.

It was now July, and we were getting very anxious to return to the island. Our only hope now was the prospect of capturing enough whales so that our profit would to some degree compensate for the useless expense of our northern trip. Another consideration gave us encouragement; we were about to visit a part of the world seldom visited by white men, and would afford us a fine opportunity to trade with the natives whatever we could spare from our outfit. We should visit Cape Bathurst and the Eskimo village of Kopuck, and many other villages along the Smoky Mountains, on the coast of Lady Franklin Bay.

In a few days a south wind sprang up, and as the heavy ice began to move northward we hoisted sail, and by keeping well in shore arrived at the lower end of the island in a short time. Here the cakes of ice were so thick and heavy we decided to land and wait until we could row to the island, which was yet several miles to the northward.

Munichchuk and his family were anxious to proceed, and started to walk the distance, while the remainder of the party, after pulling the boat well upon the shore, rolled up in blankets and were soon asleep.

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The morning following, finding that the ice had moved more to the eastward, we again launched our boat, and by hard rowing reached the island in safety. The captain of the whaling vessel met us as soon as we had landed, and the hearty welcome indicated to us his thankfulness that we had not succeeded in our anticipated wealth-getting. But what to him meant success, was to us the greatest disappointment of our lives.

The guide and his family reached the village the same night they left us, and the news of our failure had reached the ears of every one long before we arrived. The only real true sympathy we received was from the missionary and his wife. They listened to our story with much interest, and extended their heartfelt sympathy in our misfortune, and did all in their power to make our stay at the island a pleasant one.

Much work had to be done before starting eastward on the whaling expedition, and the captain assured us that we were liable to leave very soon if the wind and weather continued favorable. The furs that we had procured while on our trip to the Klondike regions were safely packed away in the storehouse with the others. The provisions and outfit that we had left at the island were brought out and deposited on board the vessel. Everything that we could spare that would be desirable to trade with the Eskimos was set aside for that purpose.

On July 10th the captain of the *Mary D. Hume* informed us that the next day we would leave Her-

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schel Island and steam eastward in pursuit of the bowhead whale. Excitement prevailed throughout the village in anticipation of the departure of the whalers. Boatloads of Eskimos could be seen during the day approaching the island, while the shouting children and the yelping of scores of dogs added to the excitement of the village. Many of the natives brought fur and ivory tusks of the walrus, and many articles of their own invention for the trade of the whites. Fish, grouse, and saddles of deer meat could now be procured of the natives much cheaper than they could be caught, and the captain of the ship, taking advantage of this opportunity, laid in an abundant supply for the voyage. Blueberries were also plenty, and our party by trading a few cups of dry tea secured a good supply.

Munichchuk and family had by this time become well settled in a new igloo, which was a very comfortable hut covered with caribou skins. So on the eve of our departure we called upon them for the purpose of completing a final settlement for their faithful services during the year. A small tent, two blankets, two dogs, one small skillet, a brass kettle, several beads, a small mirror, and several yards of red calico was the price agreed upon, but the two last articles mentioned were considered by them the most valuable and important. After this price was agreed upon a red handkerchief was added for the wife, Sooky, and a small brass watch chain for the daughter, Silook, and we then left them as happy a family as I ever saw, feeling well paid for their long journey.

## XI

### With the Whalers

#### THE MACKENZIE RIVER AND ICEBERGS—FUR TRADERS

"GIVE her a jingle!" shouted the captain, as the vessel swung around and out of the little cove where for eight months she had lain securely imbedded in a thickness of several feet of ice. "Starboard! Steady!" to the man at the wheel, and the *Mary D. Hume* belched forth great columns of smoke as she started on her trip eastward to battle with the drifting floes and blockades of Arctic ice, more formidable at this time of the year, when anxiety to reach the whaling region causes the navigator to venture on the extreme edge of caution and take chances any hour of being caught among the shifting masses or driven ashore by the relentless pressure of the inswinging pack. Leaving our dogs to the care of the good missionary, this 11th day of July found us leaving Herschel Island under a full head of steam, bound for Franklin Bay—three hundred miles away to the eastward. The crew was composed of twenty white men, and nearly the same number of



*"On nearer approach we found it to be the carcass of a  
grampus or white whale."*





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Eskimos. Many of the Eskimos winter at the island, having been brought there by the ships from the different tribes along the coast. Living in their snow igloos, on friendly and sociable terms, good-natured and honest in their dealings with the white men, they show an ambition, especially the women, to adopt our customs, and in their crude way imitate our dress and manners.

As the vessel left the island, the remaining inhabitants could be seen standing in groups along the shore, shouting and gesticulating in the most exciting manner, while several of the leaders, crowding into their skin boats, and making fast to the side of the ship by means of a long line, were loath to drop back until the island appeared but a receding speck in the distance. As the vessel rounded Kay Point, several natives were seen towing some object inshore, which on nearer approach we found to be the carcass of a grampus or white whale. The grampus are very numerous in Arctic waters and are much prized by the natives, not only for food and oil, but its skins, which are very tough, are used in constructing their long skin boats, and also for soles to their boots and shoes.

The second day out we reached the mouth of the Mackenzie River, into which we steamed and, casting anchor, procured fresh water sufficient for the season. Our course now lay directly to the north, where large icebergs could be seen floating and revolving, threatening destruction to any object within their reach, and

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it was only with the strictest watchfulness of the man at the masthead that we were enabled to steer clear of them.

On the morning of the third day we were awakened by a sudden jar of the vessel, which rocked violently, swung partly around, and finally came to a standstill. Seven bells were struck, and all hands called on deck. We had reached the pack. As far north as the eye could reach was one solid body of ice. We cruised for several hours, shoving and crowding through leads and openings, forcing them often where they did not exist, and at last were obliged to make fast by running out the large hawsers, attached to ice-hooks, which were firmly embedded in the solid ice, and await the shifting of the wind or tide to open up a path through this impenetrable mass. Several miles to the eastward could be seen the high Rocky Mountain ranges, with wild gulches leading up nearly to the summit, while evidences of recent snowslides were plainly revealed in the debris of snow, rocks, and mud that lay mashed into unshapely masses at the base of the mountains. These snow or landslides are very numerous in the coast mountains, and having once seen them come thick and fast and heard their crash and roar, one never forgets the sight or the awe inspired by it. Climbing to the masthead, I scanned the horizon with my glass. A large expanse of dark, open water could be seen away to the north, while a short distance to the right several islands appeared, around which myriads of ducks could be seen circling about and

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dropping into the small, open spaces nearby. The captain informed us that this was an annual nesting place for ducks, and no doubt many eggs could be found by visiting the islands. I soon obtained his consent, and taking four natives with baskets, we lowered the ship's dingey and were soon rowing towards the islands. As I sat in the stern of the boat I could see the movements of the birds while steering clear of the drifting cakes of ice. Our approach did not seem to frighten them in the least, for they continued to circle just above our heads. Several times I raised my fowling-piece to fire, but the natives remonstrated with "Nock-ah! Al-luk-tah." (No shoot. Ducks go.) We soon reached the solid ice, and pulling the skiff well up, quickly walked across to the island. As we climbed up the rocky bank, scores of ducks could be seen fearlessly walking about. Taking the paddles which they had brought from the boat, the natives now rushed upon them, and before they could rise knocked down no less than a half dozen. They would then creep along to another bunch and surprise them in the same way. But this sport was too tame for me, and as a fine pair of canvas-back came wheeling toward me I raised my gun and dropped them both at the first shot. But what a transformation took place at the sound of my piece! Birds seemed to spring up from under our very feet, and with a deafening roar they arose, darkening the air as they whirled about for a moment, and finally moved off in a body over the heavy ice towards the open water. The natives came

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slowly back, muttering to each other, and I knew by their black looks that they were displeased at the abrupt ending of their slaughter.

Amid the jagged rocks scores of nests were found, constructed of seaweed and lined with an abundance of down, wherein were eggs in every stage of incubation. I gathered up the game, while the natives filled the baskets with eggs and down. I found we had bagged no less than a score of canvas-backs and several specimens of the eider duck. But the majority were large, black ducks with broad, red bills, the sides of the head being white. This species is plentiful, both in the streams and along the coast. On reaching our skiff we found the tide was in and the waves rolling high. A strong wind had sprung up, and to return with the little boat was out of the question, so making it fast to a chunk of ice, we started on foot toward the ship. It was a long, circuitous tramp, and nearly night when we climbed on deck with our load. The vessel was rocking and beating the waves to a foam. At eight bells supper was served and the watch changed. A whaleboat was lowered and the skiff brought on board. The hawsers were loosed and snugly coiled on deck. The wind continued to rise, causing the vessel to move slowly to leeward. The black smoke began to roll out from her funnels, and the monotonous churning of the wheel began.

Going down to the cabin, I put on my oilskins, a sou'wester, and rubber boots, and went on deck, where I remained until midnight. The night had

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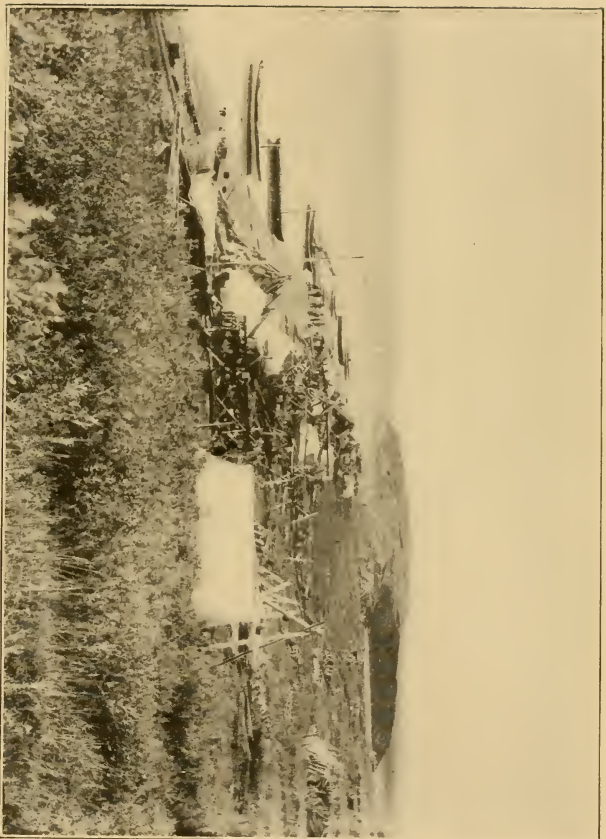
turned out cold and raw, with the wind shifting into the north and west, and the masses of clouds were broken into heavy scud, through which the midnight sun sailed like a fire-ship in a stormy sea. The pack, which for hours had been steadily crowding us shoreward, seemed to have met with some undercurrent, for it ceased to move and soon we were again moving northward.

On awakening the next morning we found a heavy mist falling, accompanied by a dense fog, making it difficult to see any distance. Soon a shout from the mate, "Bears alongside!" brought all hands on deck. Looking to leeward, we could discern the white forms of several Polar bears walking back and forth along the edge of the solid ice not fifty yards from the ship. Running for my Marlin rifle, I quickly sent a ball crashing into the shoulder of the nearest and followed it up with several more shots, when with a roar he reared his full length in the air, and with blood coursing down his side, plunged into the water and swam directly toward us. Captain Hagerty, hearing the report, came rushing out with one of the ship's heavy rifles, and with a well-directed shot Bruin rolled over and drifted back toward the ice. The other bears did not appear frightened in the least, but stood swaying their huge bodies back and forth, sniffing the air as if wondering what was the meaning of such reckless intrusion upon their peaceful domain. But they had not long to consider, for every man who could muster a rifle now began firing, and so much lead was ab-

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sorbed by the bears that when all was over it was difficult to determine to whom the honors belonged. Six large bears and a cub were killed, but with great tenacity of life, they were game to the finish. Thanks to the gunwale of the ship for our safety from the ravenous brutes. Lowering the dingey, the carcasses were towed alongside and hauled on deck. The natives were set to removing the skins, while I climbed the rigging to the masthead and joined the mate. The sky was now clear, and we could see Franklin Bay, with the Smoky Mountains just beyond, away to the right. We had moved no less than one hundred miles to the northward within the last twelve hours. We were now approaching the whaling grounds, as plenty of signs indicated. "Slick" or jellyfish could be seen floating in abundance, which is the food sought by these monsters of the deep. The whaleboats were put in readiness, and crews assigned. These boats are twenty feet long, with two sets of oar-locks, although when advancing upon a whale they are operated entirely by means of a sprit-sail. The crew is composed of six men—a mate, a boat steerer, and four sailors. The *Hume* carried four of these boats, each furnished with the following equipment: Three tubs of line, three hundred fathoms (eighteen hundred feet) in length; three bomb guns, with harpoons attached; ammunition, a glass, a fog-horn, gaff hooks, axes, knives, a cask of fresh water, and provisions for the crew sufficient for one meal. The engine was now stopped, the sails unfurled, and the captain, mounting





*"An Eskimo village on the Arctic coast near the mouth of  
the Mackenzie river."*



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to the "crow's nest" at the masthead, gave orders for every one on board to watch for a blow.

About midnight a brig was sighted off to eastward, and shifting our course, we came up to her in a few hours. She proved to be the *Beluga*, with Captain Bodfish in command, who had been three years in the Arctic, stopping the last winter at Bailey Island, and who already had taken twenty-three heads of bone and was returning to his winter quarters to coal up for his trip homeward. The captain and the first mate were rowed alongside, and were soon shaking hands and exchanging experiences with the officers of the brig. As we came nearer the island, which is a long, narrow sand-spit, several boatloads of Eskimos came out to meet us, bringing fish, furs, moccasins, and all manner of skin clothing to trade for flour, molasses, and other articles which they have learned to appreciate since coming in contact with the whites. Several fine specimens of walrus tusks were secured, about twenty Arctic fox skins, a fine head of caribou horns for mounting, and a Polar bear skin. For these we traded tea, tobacco, beads, and several pieces of red calico. Among the natives that came aboard the whaler at this place was a young Eskimo girl about sixteen years of age, who was the daughter of a Cogmolok chief. Her hair was rolled in the finest style after the native fashion, her chin was indelibly penciled with red and blue marks that indicated royalty. Her form, symmetrical and perfect; her large, lustrous eyes and smiling face attracted attention of both white men and

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natives. Her outer dress, which hung in heavy folds from her shoulders, reached to within a few inches of her feet, and was composed of pure black fox skins with no less than a dozen of the tails, which were tipped with a few hairs of white. These skins are worth no less than \$200 apiece, and her artige contained about twenty skins. She seemed much amused to see so many whites and hear us try to speak her language, although she could not speak a word of English. She made us each a present of some toy of native invention, and then left us without a word or act to show her regret, or bid us good-bye, and after she had once left the ship did not even turn her head to look after us again, which is the custom of the Eskimo royalty.

What these natives most desired was one of the whale guns that they had seen used with such deadly effect. They offered the captain eight silver fox skins for one, but he had none to spare, as its absence might impede the capture of a whale, which would have been a loss of several thousand dollars. A gun cost but five dollars. The fox skins, I learned on arriving at San Francisco, are worth fifty dollars each. I have since then often regretted that my stock in trade was so limited, as I could easily have secured a snug little fortune in furs for the market. As this extreme north country is beyond the trade limits of the Hudson Bay Company, the natives are wasting the very finest qualities of furs in the construction of rude clothing and trimmings, as their fancy dictates—furs which would

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bring thousands of dollars in our markets, and which could be secured at a trifling expense in trinkets or gaudy trappings.

After cruising about in this vicinity for several days, it was decided to steam to the northward and follow the heavy ice, which was now drifting with a heavy south wind. The second day out a whale was raised off to windward, and all the boats were lowered and gave chase. But in the haste and excitement the whale became "gallied" and turned flukes at the first approach. And although we waited several hours for him to rise again, nothing more could be seen, and the signal was hoisted to the mizzen peak, calling all hands on board again. The boats had just been hoisted to the davits when a shout from the captain, up in the crow's nest, "There she blows, off the port bow!" caused us all to look in that direction, where two spouts of water twenty-five feet high could be seen, not over five hundred yards to the left of the ship. The order was given to lower again, and with great caution the chase began. Not a word was spoken above a whisper. At the second rise the boat of the first mate was but a few feet away, and hauling to, ran directly over the back of the whale. The word was given and the boat steerer raised the gun and sent the harpoon deep into the back of the monster. As the trigger came in contact with the black skin a sharp report rang out, followed by a louder roar as the bomb exploded in the very vitals of the whale. With a sudden quiver he began to sink; but he was not to be

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taken so easily as supposed, for no sooner had he sunk from sight than the rope began to play out until the smoke rolled from the loggerhead, and the boat, with sail now lowered, was flying through the water at a high rate of speed. But soon the rope slackened and was quickly taken in, and as he rose again, two red streams shot upward, and falling directly into the boat, deluged the crew with water and blood. With a few well-directed strokes of the oars, the boat again shot close to the side of the now struggling mammal, and the second gun did its deadly work. With a hissing roar, like escaping steam, he rolled over dead in the icy waters. A small black flag was raised from the bow of the boat as a signal to the ship, which steamed up, and the dead whale was towed alongside. He was a bull of enormous size, measuring fifty feet in length, the estimated weight being twenty tons. The bow-head is the only specie of whale that inhabit the Arctic Ocean, and derives its name from the peculiar bow-shaped formation of its head and nose. The bone of this whale is of the very best quality, and a single capture will produce an average weight of two thousand pounds of whalebone to the head, the bone bringing, when prepared for the market, from four to six dollars a pound.

A platform was now raised and made fast a few feet above the body of the whale, and the work of cutting in began. A huge crane swung out from the mainmast, from which hung a large block and tackle, with hooks which were fastened into the back of the

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head and operated by a small engine on the main deck. As the carcass was raised, a half dozen men sprang from the platform with long spades and proceeded to cut off his head. As the vertebrae was reached, one of the steerers, equipped with a heavy ax, and dressed in oilskins, slid down into the chasm of blood and blubber and, supported by a rope attached to his waist, proceeded to sever this enormous bone. Ten minutes' hard work and the head pitched forward, and the sharp spades did the rest. The engine was set in motion, and as the ponderous head swung on deck, a yell of exultation burst from the lips of every one on board.

The whalebone is attached to the upper jaw, and hangs in thin slabs, thickly set together, crosswise of the gums, while from the inner edge of these slabs protrude long, thick fibers resembling horsehair, and completely filling the mouth. These slabs vary in length from a few inches up to thirteen feet, the largest ones being in front. They are fourteen inches wide where they enter the gums, but taper to a point, from which the hair extends for several feet. While feeding the mouth remains open, and as the water rushes through it is forced through the blowholes, and the food swallowed. I found by actual count that each head contains 586 slabs of bone.

As the remains of the head splashed overboard, the sails were again hoisted, and each one instructed to keep a strict watch. The crew, after cutting in their first whale of the season, had settled down for a few



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moments of much-needed rest, when a blow was sighted about a mile away to the northeast. Two boats were immediately lowered and gave chase. A few moments later a second blow was observed about the same distance to eastward, and a third boat was lowered and started in pursuit. "She blows!" shouted the men at the masthead, as the first whale again came to the top of the water, and with a loud, hissing noise, like escaping steam, sent two streams of water thirty feet into the air, which fell in a spray over the great black hulk of the enormous bowhead. But his day-dream was soon cut short, for the boat of the first mate had shot close to his side, and the deadly harpoon was driven into the flesh of the monster. As the bomb exploded, a quiver shook the icy waters as they closed over his back. Instantly the line began to play out, the smoke rolled from the loggerhead, and the boat with sails now lowered was cutting through the water at a fearful rate of speed. A large expanse of ice lay directly north of the ship, and toward this the wounded whale now headed. Soon the speed slackened and the line was quickly taken in. The question that now quickly confronted the excited crew was, "Would he blow again before going under the ice?" Something must be done, and done very quickly. If the mad rush continues the line must necessarily be severed to save their lives. Again the speed increases, and the last foot of line is out. The water is dyed with blood. The boat grinds into the slush-ice, but with a quick stroke of the knife the mate severs the line. The momentum

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gained sends the boat against the solid ice with great force. Consternation and disappointment is on every face. The whale had received his deathblow, was the opinion of all as they sprang from the boat upon the ice floe. Twenty minutes had now passed since he last arose; he could not stay under water much longer than that and live. An uninjured whale might possibly hold his breath for thirty minutes, but when injured must necessarily breathe more frequently. "She blows!" came a shout from the ship; quickly looking across the ice to the eastward, the wounded whale was seen lashing the water to a foam, the whole length of his body visible, while blood was shooting upward at every breath.

The last crew that left the ship was returning along the edge of the ice when the wounded whale shot out of the water within a few yards of them, nearly capsizing the boat, and deluged the crew with water and blood. A few quick strokes of the oar brought their boat near the side of the struggling monster, and a second harpoon was driven to the heart. A loud, muffled report was heard as the bomb exploded, and the prize rolled over dead in the Arctic waters.

Several other whales were captured within the next few days, one being a cow of enormous size, which had a young calf at her side. Whenever the mother whale would come to the surface the little one could be seen quietly resting on her flukes, or holding on to the breast in real baby fashion. It appeared heartless on the part of the whalers to deprive the little one of

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its parental protection, but the prize was too tempting, and the deadly bomb did the cruel work. The calf, now left alone to the fate of the deep, continued to follow the ship for several days, but finally disappeared altogether.

One day, during the fore part of August, while three of the boats were out, a spout was seen close to leeward of the ship. The second mate was ordered to lower the remaining boat and give chase. Taking two sailors, myself, and two natives, he started in pursuit. The weather was threatening, and the sun, which for nearly two months had been constantly visible, was now settling for the first time below the horizon into the vast expanse of ice. For nearly an hour we cruised about, and as no more signs appeared, a signal was given from the mizzen mast for our return. When suddenly, with a hissing noise, two streams of water shot into the air, and a black mass arose under the very bow of the boat we were in, nearly precipitating us into the water. Without waiting for orders from the mate, the excited boat-steerer caught up the nearest gun and plunged the harpoon into the only visible part of the now thoroughly frightened whale. With a splash of his great flukes, he quickly disappeared. The next instant our boat was cutting through the waves at a high rate of speed, the spray flying from either side higher than our heads, and the smoke rolling from the loggerhead as the line which encircled it played out faster and faster. The mate, now thoroughly enraged, rained curses upon the head of the boat-steerer for

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acting without orders, for in his excitement he had struck the whale too far back, inflicting but a slight wound which might prove fatal to us all. We knew he must come to the surface to breathe in twenty minutes at least, but what might happen before then no one knew. A fog was settling around us, and into it we rushed like mad men. Fifteen minutes passed and still the line played out. In an instant the mate bent on another line, and still the mad rush went on. A grating noise was heard, and glancing back we saw a large ice floe directly in our wake. Supposing our boat had struck it! I begged the mate to cut the line and save our lives, but he would not hear me. The line slackened a little and was quickly taken in. The boat ceased its momentum, and was only propelled by the taking in of the line. A loud, hissing noise like escaping steam was again heard, but the fog prevented our seeing the whale. Once more he blows, this time much nearer.

The mate sat holding on the tiller in dogged silence, with eyes looking straight ahead, as if to penetrate the dense fog. I looked at my watch. It was just midnight. At this rate of speed we would soon reach the main pack of ice, and that would be the end. Would the mate cut the line and save us? I grasped the handle of the knife that hung from my belt. Again the line slackened, and our hopes revived. For a few moments we gained upon him. This time he was up for ten minutes, and the boat, vigorously propelled by the oars, shot close to his side. Again he gave us the

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slip before the order was given to strike, but his speed was much retarded from fatigue or loss of blood. Suddenly the mate sprang to his feet, exclaiming, "Listen!" and a low, roaring noise could be heard, and every one knew what it meant. It was the waves dashing against the pack ice. A few quick orders from the mate, and each man sprang to the oars. The boat shot ahead, the line was thrown off and left to sink beneath the waves. He would blow again before going beneath the ice, and that would be our last chance. As he arose to the surface, our boat was but a few yards to leeward, and guided by the sound, we were soon at his side. "Give it to him!" shouted the mate, and the harpoon pierced the black skin directly over the heart. As the bomb exploded a quiver shook the water, and without a struggle he rolled over, dead.

Rowing to the pack, we towed the carcass close to the ice and made the line fast to one of the jagged chunks that lay scattered about. Drawing our boat upon the ice, we sat down to consider our situation. We were lost—that was without question. We had only enough provisions for one meal. The fog might last for several days, or even weeks. A mist was falling, and we were already wet to the skin. We had no way of knowing how far we were from the ship. We had been running directly north, and a strong south wind was still blowing, which might enable us to hear the ship's whistle, but the fog would prevent them from seeing us, even with the strongest glass, and they no doubt were beyond the sound of the fog-

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horn. We each blew until our lungs were sore, but the roaring of the waves drowned every other sound, so we turned our attention to making ourselves as comfortable as possible. Being without shelter or fire, we appealed to the Eskimos, who replied, "Shu-vuck-too Igloo" (build house). We told them to go ahead, and taking axes they began cutting cakes of ice, and by fitting them together soon constructed a low hut after the fashion of their snow houses. This being finished, they cut a large chunk of blubber from the carcass of the whale, and after depositing it upon the floor of the hut with the skin side up, cut a large hole in the top sufficient to hold several gallons. This they filled with oil taken from the whale, and by using strips of boat sail for wick, soon had a comfortable fire. We ate sparingly of our provisions, but the natives, after eating their fill of blubber, were contented, and rolling themselves like Husky dogs, were soon snoring by the side of the fire. But little sleep visited our eyes, and the night was spent in trying to dry our damp clothing. The next day was spent in strengthening the walls of our hut with more cakes of ice, as a fortification against the attack of bears. The bomb guns were reloaded and placed near the entrance to the hut. The dull hours were spent in conversing on the many topics of interest that occupied our minds. The great ice pack reaching far and wide over the Arctic Ocean for hundreds of miles to the north, and constantly drifting with the wind and tide, might carry us beyond the reach of human aid. Should the wind continue to blow from



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the south, why should we not eventually reach the North Pole? And how should we know when we were at the ninetieth degree without instruments? And if we did know, and should plant the flag of our beloved country at the pole, what proof could we leave at that place to prove to any successful explorer that we were first to discover the pole?

And should the wind shift to the north, would not that same flag go with us, even to the southern coast, if the north wind continue to blow? And yet millions of dollars are spent, and lives sacrificed by Arctic explorers in a determination to find an obscure portion of this globe, where no earth or stationary surroundings exist, and where the foot of man has never trod, and never will. These mysterious questions and many others of like nature engaged our thoughts and served to beguile the lonely hours, while we waited and prayed that something might occur or some change take place to break the monotony of our perilous surroundings and rescue us from impending doom.

Time dragged slowly. Each hour seemed almost a day as we consulted together about the probable outcome of our unfortunate position. The pack must be drifting to the northward, and if the fog did not rise soon all hope of being rescued by the ship would be lost, for the captain well knew the danger of venturing too far north so late in the season, which would imperil the vessel and lives of the crew.

The second night came on, damp and gloomy. The last morsel of our provisions was gone, and slices of



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blubber, smoked and slightly cooked by the blaze, were relished alike by us all.

Another sleepless night was passed, and still the weather continued the same. The wind shifted to eastward, and throughout the day the fog-horn was blown at intervals. As the third night approached, a fire was built outside the hut. Later the wind shifted to northward, and our hopes revived. Would the fog rise, and was the ship still in that locality? A sleet began to fall, but froze as soon as it struck the ice. We huddled together inside the hut, and finally overcome with drowsiness, fell into a troubled sleep. Once more I was in my Southern home with loved ones about me, a table was spread with wholesome food. I tried to eat, but my stomach revolted. A nauseating pain seemed to almost choke me. But some one is calling, "A-wa! A-wa!" It is the Eskimo word for listen. I sprang to my feet, bewildered. Again the call from the outside of the hut. I rushed out. Two natives were standing with arms extended and head tilted to one side to catch the sound. The wind had ceased, and snow was falling. Soon a sound came to us, echoing across the water, faintly. It was the ship's whistle. But how far away? Catching up the burning wick, I waved it back and forth until the last spark had gone out. We then turned our attention to making as big a blaze as possible.

The sky overhead was now clear and the fog was breaking away. We had left the ship on Thursday night, and this was Sunday morning. I lifted my heart

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to Him who rules both land and sea. Would He be merciful to us on this, His day? As the day advanced the sky became clear and the sun shone forth like a large ball of fire. The air was cold and crisp, but nothing daunted, we each took off our great coats and hoisted them to the top of the mast for a signal to the ship. The suspense for the next few hours was almost unendurable. We looked and looked until our eyes ached, but no ship could be seen. Not a sound had we heard since the night before. Had they left us forever?

We still had the whaleboat, and could not starve with such a supply of whale meat. We would at least make an effort to reach land. It was not safe to remain longer on the ice, which was liable to separate at any time and revolve without a moment's warning. The boat was therefore launched preparatory for our departure. A few slabs of bone were next cut out and laid in the bottom, on top of which large chunks of blubber were snugly packed. The wind being in our favor, the sail was repaired and hoisted, and we were about to start on our perilous trip, when one of the natives was seen to climb to the top of the hut, and looking eastward a moment, exclaimed, "Tow-Took! Ome-Ak-Puk!" (Look! A ship!) We each quickly looked in the direction indicated. A small, dark spot resembling smoke could barely be distinguished against the eastern horizon. The mate caught up the glass. Yes, it was the ship, heading directly toward us under a full head of steam. They had seen our signal. How

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we shouted, and shook each other's hands until the tears started from our eyes! In another hour the *Mary D. Hume* came in full view, her sails furled and her ice-clad halliards glistened in the glorious morning sunlight. And as we were taken on board, more dead than alive, we thanked the Great Father for the preservation of our lives from the fate of the deep. The bone was soon "cut in" from the whale we had killed, and the vessel turned southward. By consulting the instruments, it was found that we were  $78^{\circ} 33' N.$ —probably the furthest north ever ventured by any Arctic whaling vessel.

Putting on a full head of steam, the vessel was run under a jingle and in four days reached Bailey Island. The *Beluga* had started on her homeward trip with twenty-six heads of bone, and stopping at Herschel Island took on forty-three more (which she had taken on the two previous seasons), making a grand total of sixty-nine heads—being the largest catch on record by the Arctic fleet. The *Hume* lingered here only a few days, but succeeded in capturing several more whales, and started homeward with nineteen heads of bone, eight Polar bear skins, and several walrus. Seals being very numerous, several dozen skins were added to the cargo during the return trip. These are not the fur seal, but are known as the "hair seal," and are comparatively of little value.

On August 26th we reached Herschel Island and were warmly and hilariously welcomed by the natives, whose custom it is to swarm en masse on board every

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vessel that comes within reach of shore. Before our lines were made fast the whole population had turned out, shouting and gesticulating in the wildest excitement as they scrambled up the ship's sides, dragging their heavy sealskin "poke-sacks," without which an Eskimo never travels. The day was spent in trading our dogs, provisions, and cast-off clothing to the natives for furs, ivory, and relics, which added much to our collection.

The Eskimo ambition to imitate the white man's manner and dress is often quite marked, and is sometimes amusing in the extreme. An old coat, or a pair of trousers are prized very highly and considered a valuable addition to their attire, and worn by all without regard to sex.

The next few days were spent in preparing for our long voyage homeward. The whaling apparatus was safely stowed away in the warehouse, the bear skins that had trailed from the spanker boom were taken below, and the whalebone, tied into bundles, was securely packed into the ship's hold. The rigging was then carefully overhauled and everything put in readiness for the homeward trip. The nights were getting very cold, and thin ice was beginning to form around the ship as we bade the missionary and his family good-bye, and raising anchor, steamed out of the little cove into the broad expanse of the ocean. The Stars and Stripes were hoisted to the masthead, where it proudly floated above the Union Jack, and amid a din of shouts from the natives, and the yelping of many Huskies, we

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left the place where we had spent nearly two years of Arctic life, with mingled joy and sorrow, adventure and peril, bright hopes and disappointment, to battle again with the wind and wave for forty-two days on a return trip to our beloved America. Before us were the ice-floes of the Arctic, the closing in at Point Barrow, the rocks and reefs of the Bering Straits, and the rolling forties of the Northern Pacific Ocean, all to encounter and overcome before we could reach home and loved ones.

## XII

### Homeward Bound

CLOSED IN—POINT BARROW—AT CAPE NOME—  
WHERE DID WEGMER GET HIS MONEY?

THE *Mary D. Hume* was a two-masted brig of about one hundred and fifty tons burden, and was also equipped with engines and propelled by steam whenever the wind was contrary. For three years she had wintered in the Arctic, and while she was considered seaworthy by her owners, old sailors shook their heads as we left the island, for the work of capturing whales requires a vessel of strength and endurance which many larger ships than the *Hume* did not possess. As Armstrong, the second mate, replied when asked his opinion, "She be a good dry-weather hulk, but if she be struck by a squall, look out." But the captain assured us of the safety of his vessel, and with anxiety to be on the way, we settled down to the task assigned us, and like true seamen obeyed the orders of our superior officers. After a few hours of apprenticeship, Thompson was assigned to assist the engineer, Sisk and Jack as deck hands, while I was supposed to take my turn at the wheel. The second day out a north wind sprang

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up, and the floating ice began to crowd us shoreward. The mates kept up a continual watch from the mast-head to avoid the threatening ice-floes.

On reaching Point Barrow we found that we were completely headed off by the solid ice. As far north as the eye could reach was a solid field of icebergs, some towering forty feet in the air, and others nearly level with the surface of the ocean. In vain we sought for an opening, but to no purpose. The great body continued to crowd us toward the shore until the Coast Mountains could be seen not more than a mile away. A hurried consultation took place between the captain and the mates, and the ship was then run ahead again as far into the moving mass as it could go, and was soon surrounded by solid ice. The great danger of being crushed was now apparent to all, and with great apprehension we watched the moving mass. The vessel creaked and grated as the pressure increased, but the formation of the keel caused it to be lifted, and the danger lessened thereby. We were now at the mercy of the wind. If it continued from the north, the ice would soon congeal and the solid mass would remain during the whole winter. Our only hope was in the south wind springing up and thereby release us from prison before we were frozen in fast for the winter. The ice soon ceased to move, and the danger of being crushed was nearly past, but no open water could be seen in any direction. We each left our post of duty, and all collected on deck. The fires were allowed to burn low, as we were obliged to patiently wait. But when



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on the second morning our condition was unaltered, our party of four decided to pack our belongings ashore and, if the weather did not change, to make our way on foot to Cape Nome, and there meet the United States revenue cutter and arrange for transportation to San Francisco. Taking a small tent with us, we started across the ice toward shore with our heavy packs. Again we seemed doomed to disappointment. The possibility of our spending another winter in the land of snow and ice made us heartsick and lonely. But we would do our best before all hope of escape was past. Again the question came to us, "Would we succeed?"

On reaching land, we pitched our tent and decided to wait one day more before turning our backs upon the possible chance of proceeding by ship.

It was late in the evening, with no signs of any change in the weather, when we ceased our consultation and rolled up in our blankets for the night. But the wind shifted and the weather became warmer, and so comfortable was our slumber that it was broad daylight before we awoke the next morning. As we lay yawning in our comfortable bunks, we were suddenly startled by the shrill whistle from the direction of the ship. Springing up, we hurriedly dressed, thinking that some new trouble had befallen the crew. But as we stepped outside a shout of joy rang out from the lips of each one. There stood the ship at anchor within a half mile of the shore, with steam up ready to start. A strong south wind had sprung up while

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we were sleeping, breaking up the whole field of ice, and the old whaling vessel again stood out proudly in the blue Arctic waters. A lifeboat was already on its way to bring us back, and once more we lifted our hearts to the great Giver of all good, whose protection had constantly been over us, and whose guiding hand had brought us safely through perils by land and sea, and whose Word had been our only comfort when no human help was near or friend to sympathize. And an earnest prayer burst forth from our lips for His continued guidance during our homeward voyage.

We soon rounded Point Barrow and arrived at the Government Refuge Station. The anchor was cast off, a boat was lowered, and the day spent on shore. We were now on American soil, and our hearts beat with pride as we considered the extent of our possessions. Our readers will realize somewhat the distance to this northern extremity of Alaska, when we remember that the Stars and Stripes which catch the breeze at this station float within nine hundred miles of the North Pole.

Here also was located the northernmost mission in the world. The very fact that mail is received but once a year easily makes it that. One has but to think what it would mean to him, accustomed to several mails a day, to telegraph and telephone communication, to wait twelve long, tedious months without a single word from home or the outside world to break the silence. Shut in and shut out. Here also is located the Government Reindeer Station. These

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tame reindeer of Siberia were introduced into Alaska by the Government but a short time before, and only about fifty were there at this time. These animals are wonderfully adapted to the cold regions of the Northwest, and feed on the tundra or white moss that is found in abundance. The native Eskimos have been taught their care and management, so that they might live off these herds. Every part of the reindeer are of use to the natives. They are very fleet of foot and can travel a hundred miles a day.

The reindeer proved their efficiency in a Government relief expedition in 1897, for the relief of shipwrecked sailors at Point Barrow, when they made a long journey north of the Arctic Circle in midwinter, one thousand miles over a route never before traveled, even by dogs, across frozen seas and snow-capped mountains. At the relief station there are kept constantly on hand, stowed away in the storehouses, provisions sufficient for a dozen whaling crews for two years.

The mission was conducted by Dr. Marsh and his wife, and was a means of doing good and effectual work among the Eskimos. During the cold weather Dr. Marsh would visit the natives in their snow huts, riding behind his reindeer team, and always found them willing to attend the service in large crowds.

Towards evening a favorable wind began to blow, and leaving this point, we resumed our journey southward. Passing the Sea-horse Island and Point Hope, we sighted East Cape, on the Siberian Coast. The wind again became contrary, and it was with difficulty

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that we could make any headway. Two days later we passed Farewell Rock and arrived at Cape Prince of Wales. Many natives came on board at this place, bringing fur and articles to trade, which enabled us to secure fine specimens to add to our collection. Among the skins brought on board were several skins of the mottled seal, which surpass all other skins for beauty and luster. The natives continued to remain on shipboard until we reached the Pacific Steam Whaling Company's coaling station at Port Clarence. Here we landed, and for three days the forecastle hands, together with all the natives that could be pressed into work, were engaged in filling the ship's coal bunkers with coal from this station. On the 10th day of September we were ready to start. The natives were paid off; those who had accompanied us from Herschel Island, many of whom had lived on board the *Hume* for three years, were all left behind at this place, and men, women, children, and dogs, with their belongings, all huddled together on the coast, as the ship steamed away for the last time, leaving them to return to their old haunts and modes of living.

We were now in the Bering Strait, and navigation being favorable, made good progress, and in short time rounded Sledge Island and landed opposite Cape Nome.

This mining village is located on the northwestern coast of Alaska, and at this time (1899) the only inhabitants were a few miners, living in tents and shacks, and a more discouraged and homesick set of men I never saw. The land along the coast is low

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and level, and it was with great difficulty that we could land at all. As no harbor could be found near this place, we were obliged to anchor some distance out, and row in with small boats. Gold had only been discovered near the mountains, and the output was not very flattering. Little did we think at that time that six months would not pass until this barren cape would become the great Eldorado of the Northwest, with an inhabitation of thirty-five thousand people.

Many of the miners were without provisions sufficient for the winter, and were supplied from the whaling vessel until the surplus was exhausted. One of the miners came on board and offered the captain one dollar per pound for a sack of flour, but was refused. Others begged to be taken to San Francisco, and offered large inducements in gold to accompany us, but as no vacancy was left unfilled, and the whalers are not allowed to carry passengers, their offers could not be accepted. Many of the miners had left their claims unworked, and with a team of one or two dogs, were making their way across the mountains toward Dawson City. Others tried to sell their claims to us for a meager sum with which to get away from the place, declaring that they would starve if they remained at Cape Nome. Among those who came on board our ship at Cape Nome was a man whose appearance attracted the attention of every one. His face wore a sad expression, and the deep furrows that outlined his features gave him the appearance of a person haunted by some great sorrow of the past. His

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name was Carroll, and the story he told caused much consternation on board ship, especially among the members of our party.

This man had come to the Klondike when the first gold discovery was made in the Northwest Territory, near Dawson City, and had been successful in accumulating several thousand dollars. But later his mine had run out, and for some time luck seemed to be against him. One day he fell in with a young man that had been working a mine on shares, and becoming discouraged, they together originated a scheme by which they might make money. Consequently they invested several dollars in fancy calico, knives, and beads, together with many trinkets, to trade to the natives, and taking a small tent and camping outfit, they started for the Arctic Coast. Passing up the Porcupine River, they reached the Old Crow Mountains. Here they began to blaze a trail across the Davidson Mountains and reached the coast over the same route that has already become familiar to our readers. Here they exchanged their stock with the Eskimos for dogs, with which they returned to Dawson over the same trail on which they came. These dogs were sold to the miners at an enormous profit of several hundred dollars. So well pleased were they with their enterprise that they decided to extend their business, and immediately invested in a large amount of trading stock, and after securing help from the native Loucheaux Indians, started again over the same trail. A chart had been made out while on the previous trip, which was now



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revised and a permanent trail established. When the head waters of the Babbage River was reached, they constructed a raft from the small pines that grew along the foothills, and after several days of hard work, managed to reach the coast and landed near the whale carcass that was stranded a short distance from shore. Here they established a permanent trading post, and spent the whole winter in trading with the Eskimos for dogs. A cabin was built from driftwood that was thickly strewn along the shore, and their dogs were fed from the whale blubber. During the winter nights many Arctic foxes would frequent the place to feed from the whale carcass, and many skins were secured by setting traps.

Toward spring, as the days began to lengthen and the weather to moderate, they packed up their belongings, and taking nearly two hundred Husky dogs, they returned to the mining camp at Dawson City, over the same trail described by our chart. Here they found ready sale for their dogs at a Klondike price, and quickly exchanged them for gold dust. They had now between them about \$20,000.

The young man had become very anxious to return to the Southern States, but was discouraged in this by Carroll, who wished to spend another winter on the coast. One day a miner came to their camp who had just sold his claim and was going to return home the next week, having about \$15,000 in gold. His name was Johnsen, a native of Sweden, who had left his own country but a few years before to make his



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fortune in America. He was much elated over his success, and was anxious to return to his people and country. The young man was now more determined than ever to return with Johnsen to the States. A stormy protest from Carroll ensued, which ended in a division being made of the profits from the trading enterprise, and he prepared to return to his home with about \$10,000. The day was set for their departure. The men all drank freely, and on the evening before they were to go, all met at a saloon for a time of drunkenness and debauchery. It was noticed that while the young man spent his money freely, himself drank very little. But Carroll was somewhat addicted to drink and drank heavily, and was carried to his shack the next morning in an insensible condition, and as he did not recover, a physician was called, who pronounced it a case of having been drugged. Suspicion fell immediately upon the two miners who had left during the night of the revelry and had not been seen by any one afterwards. Carroll kept his money in a secret place, known only to himself and the young man who had been his partner. His friends searched the one room in which he lived, but could find no trace of his gold. Rumors of a bold robbery having been committed was soon spread through the town, and many people flocked to Carroll's camp. Although excitement ran high and many threats were made, they were powerless to act intelligently until the unfortunate man recovered consciousness, and they could do nothing but wait. For several days Carroll struggled

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between life and death. Search was continued for some secret place where his wealth might be secreted, but all to no purpose. A week passed before he was able to articulate or understand a word. Finally, one morning as he appeared much improved, he was asked if he knew where his gold was left. He looked bewildered for a moment, and then, pointing to a corner of the room, motioned for them to look above the bunk on which he lay. The bed was moved out, and under his directions an opening made in the wall by removing a narrow piece of board which had been fitted into place. This opening revealed a half-length of stove-pipe, securely fastened at each end by sheet-iron covers, which were soldered fast. On the side of the pipe was a slide about six inches in length, which was wide open. This pipe was removed and held up for his inspection. "Open it," he almost shouted with excitement. The pipe was vigorously shaken; it was empty. The sick man stared for a moment, his eyes rolled in their sockets, then but one word escaped his lips; it was, "Jack!" The next moment he was raving crazy.

For weeks the doctor cared for the unfortunate man, and it was only after a severe run of fever that he began to recover. The next day after the discovery of the theft, a posse of miners set out in search of some clew to the whereabouts of the robbers. Progress was slow, owing to the length of time that had elapsed since the perpetration of the robbery. The boat did not leave on the night of the robbery, and if the men had waited until the next day, some one must have

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seen them; and in answer to the question, every one they met declared that they had seen nothing of them whatever. The main trail toward Lake Linderman was followed by a few, others followed the course of the river, while a third party set out on the trail across to the coast. But to all inquiry not a clew was to be found to give any light whatever to the searchers.

Finally, after several weeks had passed, word was received from Lake Bennett that the body of a man bearing the description of the Swede Johnsen had been found near the lake, hidden under some brush and rocks. A dozen miners immediately started for that place with a strong team of dogs to bring the body to Dawson. On arriving at the place, they found the body to be that of Johnsen, the miner, who had left the saloon on the night of the robbery with \$15,000. He had been shot through the head, the ball entering just behind the left ear and coming out near the right temple. His money and revolver were both gone, and his body lay just as it had pitched forward toward the campfire, indicating that a foul, deliberate murder had been committed.

The Canadian Mounted Police were notified and every effort put forth by them to run down the murderer, but failed. He was followed as far as Seattle, Washington, but there all trace of him came to an abrupt ending. He had been seen by several parties, but soon departed and has never been heard of since.

As our miner finished relating this story of his life of misfortune and sorrow, he hid his face in his hands,

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and his body shook with emotion. Our party had gathered about him during this recital, filled with wonder, excitement, and indignation. But as he ceased speaking, we all sprang to our feet. "And what was the name of your villainous partner?" we asked with emotion, the hot blood rushing through our veins. "Wegmer," he replied, "Jack Wegmer."

## XIII

### Nonevok Islands

COD-FISHING NEAR FOX ISLANDS—THE ROLLING  
FORTIES—WE ENTER THE GOLDEN GATE: SAN  
FRANCISCO

A SHRILL whistle from the ship's engine warned all hands that we were about to leave Cape Nome. Bidding the miners a hurried good-bye, we soon steamed out into the Bering Sea. Each man now returned to his post of duty, and the weather remaining fair, we proceeded on our journey. On reaching the Nonevok Islands, we dropped anchor and spent a few hours in fishing for cod. Several reels of small rope were brought on deck, each reel containing about thirty fathoms of line. Large hooks were fastened to these lines, and the reels attached to the railing of the deck. The hooks were then baited with small chunks of fat pork and dropped into the water. The reel began to unwind until the hooks reached the bottom. For some time there was no movement, when suddenly one of the reels began to spin around, and the fish was quickly brought on board. It was a small cod, and as there were no more indications of a catch, the captain decided that

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the water was too shallow, and ordered the crew to steam further down the Strait before another cast was made. When Fox Islands was reached, we again cast anchor and let down our lines for another trial at cod fishing. At this place the water was about twenty fathoms deep, and we met with much better success. The fish taken here were large and of better quality. The sport was enjoyed by the whole crew, and nearly all the day was spent in replenishing our larder with fresh cod. Enough were taken to last for several days at least, and then passing out between the islands which were scattered across the southern extremity of the Bering Strait, we entered the northern Pacific Ocean.

We had now left the last port, and directing our course straight toward San Francisco, started to cross the wild, rolling forties, as that part of the ocean is termed that lies between the fortieth and fiftieth degree of latitude.

As we entered this great, angry expanse of water, a feeling of dread and apprehension seemed to take possession of every one on board. We now began to realize the risk we had taken in accepting passage on board so small a vessel, and especially one that old sailors had told us was not seaworthy. But it was too late now, and the wind being favorable, the sails were all set, and with a full head of steam on, we made the best possible time in an endeavor to cross this most dangerous part of our return trip.

During the first few days the weather continued fair, and we made good time, notwithstanding the

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ocean was rough and disagreeable to navigate. We had expected this, and everything on board was made fast and as snug as possible. We now began to flatter ourselves that the worst part of the voyage was over, and had become quite accustomed to the roughness of the sea. But when about ten days out, we were awakened one night by a sudden lurch of the ship, which sent us all sprawling from our bunks to the floor. Hurriedly slipping into our clothing, we made our way as best we could to the upper deck. The sailors were all busy furling the sails and making everything fast, and we knew by their quick tones and anxious looks that the much dreaded squall was expected. The wind from the east was blowing a perfect gale, while a heavy bank of black clouds could be seen slowly rising from the eastern horizon. The captain and first mate were standing side by side watching every movement and giving orders to the man at the wheel, while the fourth mate was directing the work aloft and clinging to the rigging of the mainmast, high above our heads. The smoke from the galley was rolling out black as jet over the quarterdeck, blinding our eyes so we were obliged to crouch down on the windward side of the ship in order to see at all. The vessel plunged like mad as the storm increased. Rain fell in torrents, and the waves washed over the lower deck as the storm broke upon us in all its fury. The hatchways were fastened down, and all hands stood ready for action. The waves continued to roll higher and higher, but the vessel rode bravely over them,



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the puffing of her engines being heard above the roaring of the storm. An hour had passed and still no sign of the storm abating, when suddenly a great wave swept over the deck with such force that the hatchway was carried away and tons of water poured into the forecabin. Bunks and clothing belonging to the sailors were immediately soaked and in a short time were floating about in the dirty water. The third mate was instructed to take two or three men and repair the hatchways. They had scarcely reached the main deck, when shouts from the captain called them back. The engineer had just appeared on deck, his pale face and wild looks told every one that our worst fears were realized. "The ship had sprung a leak." The water was already pouring into the coal bunkers, and in less than an hour would reach the engines. The leak must be stopped at all hazards. A dozen men hurried to the engine room, led by the plucky engineer. The rest of the crew were ordered to get the buckets, and every man called into action. A line was formed leading from the top of the stairs to the coal bunkers, and the work of bailing began, leaving the man at the wheel in full charge of the rolling ship. The wind was now driving us westward at a swift rate as the storm continued to rage. Another half hour passed, the puffing of the engine could no longer be heard, the pumps ceased their motion, and the *Mary D. Hume* was at the mercy of the wind and waves. Three of the lifeboats had already been swept away, and the fourth one was also filled with water

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as it hung from the side of the ship. Soon a huge wave struck this boat full in the center, crushing it like an eggshell, leaving the ends still hanging from the davits, while broken splinters were scattered on deck.

One boat was now left us; but this one, which hung alongside of the wheelhouse, was protected by it, and we prayed that this one might be spared us. But the powerful, destroying elements were still unsatisfied. A loud peal of thunder, almost deafening us, which was followed instantly by such a glare of lightning that seemed to send electric flashes along the mainstays and crosstrees, lighting up the whole surroundings for a moment. The next instant a monstrous wave broke over the stern, carrying with it the roof of the wheelhouse; the water rushing in, enveloped the wheelman and nearly threw him to the floor. The last lifeboat was torn from its fastenings, lifted into the air, and then plunged into the trough of the sea, and immediately sank beneath the waves. Suddenly the wind seemed to shift and came whirling and rushing from every direction. The ship swerved, turned partly around, and the next moment settled in the trough. On either side was now a high wall of water reaching above the vessel. For a moment she seemed to remain almost motionless, and then again began to rise. But as the vessel struggled to reach the top, a tremendous hurricane swept over her, and with a terrific crash the mainmast snapped at the base and fell to the deck, where it lay across

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the starboard bow, the shrouds and rigging beating the waves at every plunge.

The fourth mate was standing near the head of the stairs, and despite his struggles, was carried out upon the rushing wave. He was a Portuguese and an excellent swimmer. For a moment he was seen treading the topmost wave, and then disappeared. But as the vessel rolled to port, the broken spar was lifted above the waves, and clinging to the rigging was the Portuguese. The next moment he sprang upon the deck, none the worse for his plunge. Two other sailors were missing, and as no one saw them swept overboard, it was supposed that they must have met their fate by the same great wave that carried away the mate. "Another wave like that and we are gone," shouted the captain through the trumpet; but the men were praying and calling on their Maker for help, and He who has all power over both wind and wave heard their cry. The storm passed as quickly as it came, and only the rolling waves and broken ship told of the mad freaks of the ocean squall.

The engineer and his men had succeeded in stopping the leak, which proved to be only the parting of the seams in the bottom of the bunkers, and after being tightly calked, the water was soon reduced by the faithful bailing of the sailors. The fires were again rekindled and the engine started, the pumps began to work, and in just eight hours from the time the storm struck the vessel we were again steaming southward. The hatchways were repaired, the broken

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mast was lashed to the deck rail, and the wheelhouse covered with sailcloth.

Much damage had been done by the water in the hold, but our skins and a part of our collections were safe, and our hearts were again lifted up to God in thankfulness that our lives had been spared from the fate of the deep. Observations proved that the ship had been driven more than one hundred miles out of her course by the storm.

On September 23d we passed the fortieth degree and encountered no more serious difficulty thereafter. At Point Rae the revenue cutter met us with custom house officers on board, which gave us the first news from civilization that we had heard for more than a year. The war with Spain was ended and peace again restored, was the first news that greeted our ears, and which brought a shout from our lips.

We soon passed the Golden Gate and entered the harbor at San Francisco with our dilapidated whaling vessel.

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The rest of the story is soon told. A few days were spent in settling with the Pacific Steam Whaling Company, owners of the *Mary D. Hume*, and in disposing of our skins and fur. We found the fur market firm and the demand for Arctic fur steadily increasing, and the modest sum received made up to some extent for our misfortune.

On October 12th we reached home and loved

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ones, having been gone for nearly two years. And as we now look back over the past, with all of its adventures, its privations and hardships, together with some enjoyments, we feel thankful to our Heavenly Father that we are still alive, and trust that we are wiser, if not richer men, because of our adventurous experiences in the "Frozen Northland."



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